

Open Research Online

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

'The roles of convention and experience in a unified theory of existence statements'

Thesis

How to cite:

Senior, Michael (1991). 'The roles of convention and experience in a unified theory of existence statements'. PhD thesis The Open University.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 1991 The Author



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.00010160>

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk

OX170144F
UNRESTRICTED

Name: MICHAEL SENIOR B. A. (HONS.)

Thesis title: 'THE ROLES OF CONVENTION AND
EXPERIENCE IN A UNIFIED THEORY OF
EXISTENCE STATEMENTS'

For degree: PhD

Discipline: Philosophy

Submission Date: 1991

Date of submission: 14th January 1991

Date of award: 24th October 1991

ProQuest Number: C331946

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent on the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest C331946

Published by ProQuest LLC (2019). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All Rights Reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page</u>
Abstract	1
Introduction: Assertion and Ontology	3
I SOME HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEMS AND ATTEMPTED SOLUTIONS	
1 Plato's Rule	11
2 Esse est Percipi	31
3 Anselm's Distinctions	46
4 Russell's Theory of Descriptions	64
5 Semantics and Ontology	77
II FROM UNIVERSALS TO CHAIRS AND TABLES	
Introduction	116
1 Concerning Universals	118
2 The World of Science and Medicine	138
Wittgenstein's 'family resemblance' metaphor	158
Syndrome Construction	163
'Upper and lower case' conditions	170
3 On What There Isn't	179
4 A Visit to the Crypto-Zoo	191
Interim Conclusions	207
4a The Book of Job	212
5 The World of Things	225

III	CONVENTION AND EXPERIENCE	
	Introduction	233
	Convention	236
	Experience	241
	Convention and Experience	246
IV	TESTING THE THEORY	
	Introduction	249
	1 Does Extra-Sensory Perception exist?	251
	2 Do Black Holes exist?	260
	3 Does Evil exist?	267
	4 Does God Exist?	275
	Conclusion	283
Appendix I:	Brunton on Berkeley: A note on the grammar of discovery	287
Appendix II:	Text of St. Anselm	294
Appendix III:	Symposium: 'On What There Is'	297
Appendix IV:	To Exist Or Not To Exist	300
Appendix V:	The Spirits of the Yellow Leaves: A footnote to the grammar of existence	307
Appendix VI:	The Biggest Snail On Earth: Thoughts on the concept of a necessary being	310
Appendix VII:	<u>'Religion and the Scientific Outlook'</u> by T. R. MILES	319
	Bibliography	328

Notes and References

I have adopted the following system of annotation. Points which do not belong in the body of the text but should be read along with it as qualifications or expansions I have set as footnotes at the bottom of the page. References to other works and other parts of this one which need not be absorbed along with the text are available if needed in the form of notes at the end of chapters. The first form I have marked with the single letter N (since normally no more than one per page occurs) and the latter in the normal way with numbers.

In addition there are a number of extended footnotes on points raised in the modern literature and in this text which I did not wish to leave undiscussed but which do not form part of the direct course of the argument. These I have set as Appendices at the end of the thesis, and I have referred to them at the appropriate point in the text and cross-referred to their textual relation in their titles.

ABSTRACT

Statements are made both in philosophy and in other disciplines about whether or not an item exists. Attention is normally focused on the answer, and therefore on the item posited, rather than on what is meant by the statement. Possibly as a result of this there seems to have developed a range of possible meanings to the assertion, denial or question of existence, and this in turn has given rise to various philosophical problems. An attempt is made here to simplify the situation. It is proposed that all existence statements carry the same import, and that if this were understood both confusions and disagreements would disappear. The investigation to this end proceeds (in Section I) by identifying the problems in the sphere of existence statements by means of historical examples, which in turn will show that in spite of attempted solutions residual problems remain. With these in mind a clarification of the subject is undertaken by considering (in Section II) a range of existence statements and the methods used for disputing and determining them. The conclusion reached is that the meaning of existence statements always depends both on

convention or agreement on the one hand. and on experience or observation on the other, as opposed to being exclusively related to either: that both are necessary factors in the identification of their meaning while neither is sufficient. The third Section then clarifies these terms, and finally the fourth states and tests the theory.

Introduction

ASSERTION AND ONTOLOGY

This thesis is concerned with what is meant when somebody says that such-and-such exists. The intention is to arrive at a simple description which will apply to all such cases, rather than a set of descriptions with different applications. That is what is meant by 'unified theory' in the title. The motive for this, as will become apparent, is that I think the present and historical disunity on the subject has led to a great deal of unnecessary disagreement. Those who appear to be in conflict might be reconciled if it can be shown that they are saying the same thing in different ways. Perhaps this may best be done by revealing the illusoriness of the difference and displaying the essential nature of the sameness.

It is obvious that part of the meaning of existence statements may relate to the essence or being of the thing in question, a field dealt with by ontology, the theory of being. I mention this because I wish to make a distinction between ontology and the subject of this thesis. Of course one of the things which someone might mean when asserting that something exists is that it possesses in itself an independent state of being - indeed to the layman it would seem likely that this would be intended.

In order that I should be able to make the distinction, however, it is sufficient that it were found to be the case that in some instances, or even only in one, no such implication is involved. If I may then make the distinction validly I can say that it is possible that no implication as to independent being is ever made by an assertion of existence. I am not suggesting that any of these things are so, merely that they would be possible.

These are of course matters which will concern us further.

Philosophers are not always clear and consistent, unfortunately, in their use of the term ontology, and this has occasionally hampered understanding in an already rather subtle area of thought. (1). I mean by ontology the study or theory of being, and not a language or belief system to do with what exists. (N). If I were to go further and consider what is meant here by 'being' or 'existence' in these cases (and I take the two words for present purposes to be synonymous) it would be begging the question we are about to investigate.

N: Some philosophers (2) speak of 'an' ontology, rather as one might speak of 'a theology'. This no doubt arises from its secondary use in logic to mean the set of entities which a theory requires. I prefer to avoid the possibility of confusion (1) and use it only in its general sense.

What concerns us here is what is meant when existence is asserted. That (the meaning of existence statements) is not, is this terminology, ontology. It may be, as I have said, that a part of the meaning could involve a theory as to the nature of the thing in a realm distinct from both the asserter and the assertion. Thinking about such a realm is ontology.

Although, as I have said, this thesis is not strictly operating in the field of ontology - a position which might be re-described by saying it is concerned with existence-statements rather than existence - I do not find it the least bit problematic to accept ontology, in this work, as a near-neighbour. It is a branch of study which has recently been somewhat out of fashion. Along with other -isms and -ologies it has seemed suspect because of its metaphysical connections. (3). Empiricism was not of course a discovery of the Vienna school, nor did its hold over philosophy decline with the rejection of some of that school's doctrines. Ayer (loc.cit.) was aware that he was working in the same field as Kant.

Having "established our unavoidable ignorance of things in themselves, and limited all that we can know to mere phenomena" (4) where do we find room for ontology? On the face of it it is hard to see what could be more empirical than what there is. From what other source could we get our experiences? If from some form of unreality, then empiricism founders. (N). However since it will be necessary to bear in mind throughout this work the distinction I have just made, it would not be appropriate to launch a reasoned defence of ontology here, since it is not the business in hand. It will in fact often be necessary to resist involvement in questions of whether a certain item does or does not exist, in the search for what is to be understood by asserting its existence.

N: Peter Winch makes a relevant distinction between experimental and theoretical approaches to the investigation of reality. "Whereas the scientist investigates the nature, causes and effects of particular real things and processes, the philosopher is concerned with the nature of reality as such and in general." To conflate the two, Winch points out, is to commit the error of failing to observe an ambiguity in the phrase 'the investigation of the nature of reality'. The question 'What is real?' "is not an empirical question at all, but a conceptual one." (5).

Thus when Plato says that what is real is what has the power to cause effects (6) he is involved in ontology: when this work investigates what that must mean. if true. it is not. but only because it does not concern us whether or not it is true. In the same spirit we cannot undertake a discussion of whether or not existence is a real predicate (7). It will be interesting to understand, on the other hand, why some philosophers talk as if they assume that it is. others as if it is clear that it is not. and why still others evidently regard the matter as quite irrelevant.

It is impossible. as this Introduction has already shown. to write philosophy outside a historical context. We shall see philosophers taking some trouble to remain bona fide empiricists while fully aware of the inadequacies of some of empiricism's manifestations. (8). It may be. I feel. that enough action and re-action has by now taken place for one to be able to steer a course through calm water between the Scylla of metaphysics and the Charybdis of 'verificationism'. There have been attempts in the past to deal with the subject of existence in non-ontological ways. (9). This work is not an attempt to do the same. partly because I do not feel, as they evidently did. that to accept a background of ontology is to embrace metaphysics. In fact a demonstration of why these and other attempts ultimately fail to satisfy the requirements of the subject is part of the task before us.

References

1. See below I.5 p.84
2. Ibid p.77
3. See for instance A. J. AYER, 'Language, Truth, and Logic' Gollancz. 1962. p.34
4. IMMANUEL KANT. 'The Critique of Pure Reason', Preface; Watson's translation p.6.
5. PETER WINCH. 'The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy'. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973) pp 8,9.
6. Sophist, 247E See below I. 1.p.20
7. IMMANUEL KANT, 'The Critique of Pure Reason' and I.7. below.
8. See for instance below I.6. pp.99-100.
9. See for instance below Sections I.2. and I.5.

I SOME HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEMS AND ATTEMPTED SOLUTIONS

Introduction

This Section provides illustrations of ways the range of subject matter surrounding questions of existence has been dealt with in the past as a step towards the attempt to deal with the problems thus illustrated. It does not intend to undertake an exhaustive review of the history of the topic but rather to indicate by examples the scope of the matter being dealt with and to isolate the residual problems which remain to be dealt with.

Not surprisingly we shall start this process with a consideration of the ideas of the Greeks, and in particular Plato's 'Theaetetus' and its historical background. Since Plato lays down a rule for distinguishing between what exists and what does not, it is important to understand what exactly his rule implies. Whether or not this is what he intended, it emerges that it has firm relational implications. It more or less rules out anything which might be termed 'absolute existence' - that is, the idea that an item can exist independently, without reference to its relation to anything else, and without the requirement of observation.

The Section then proceeds to follow up this train of thought by considering a branch of philosophy concerned with this particular question of 'absolute' existence: namely the philosophy of Berkeley. Consideration of Berkeley's philosophy therefore forms the second part of this Section, since its relevance in this discussion is to these thoughts on Plato's dictum.

As a further example of the historical background to the subject and the type of residual problems remaining, some specific points arising from Anselm's 'ontological' proof of the existence of God are dealt with next.

There then follows consideration of two branches of philosophy which may claim to have disposed of any problems related to existence statements, namely Bertrand Russell's mechanism for transformation of proper-name statements into statements containing description; and the linguistic concerns of a modern branch of philosophy mainly represented by Quine and Carnap.

The Section as a whole is concerned with scene-setting - providing a basis on which the subsequent Sections may work towards conclusions on the subject of existence statements.

It is often debated in the area of philosophy to do with existence theories whether or not we can speak of the non-existent. It might be said, for instance, that if existence can be asserted of a subject, then so can its contrary. The question of whether or not we can speak of the non-existent has two aspects. 1. Can we, in the first place, conceive of it; if not we cannot speak of it, and statements about the non-existent must be meaningless. 2. On the other hand, in thinking or speaking of it are we not bringing something into existence, for instance by accidentally attributing qualities to what we say is non-existent. These related points are dealt with at length by Plato, and his investigation of this question is where we shall now start.

In The Theaetetus Plato left open the possibility that the schools of thought which later became known as 'phenomenalism' and 'idealism' can co-exist: that is, that reality consists of sensed data and also of thought. "... the mind contemplates some things through its own instrumentality, others through the bodily faculties." (1) The terminology of The Theaetetus does not help, and when he treats of existence (as opposed to knowledge) Plato dips his toe into deep Aegean water:

SOCRATES: Under which head, then, do you place existence? For that is, above all, a thing that belongs to everything (2)

We shall find the subject clarified in The Sophist, the main area of our concern in this chapter, and it is unnecessary to delay matters at present by investigation of the translation. But the idea of existence being a thing and belonging to things raises more problems than it solves. By this route Plato approaches the idealist conclusion he has as his aim: "... knowledge does not reside in the impressions, but in our reflection upon them. It is there, seemingly, and not in the impressions, that it is possible to grasp existence and truth." (3) The tagging of existence to thought, however loosely, raises the problem of whether what is thought automatically exists, and (its corollary?) whether what does not exist cannot be thought.

In 188C of The Theaetetus Plato has Socrates make the move from 'Knowing or not knowing' to 'Being or not being'. If a man sees or hears or touches something, then that which he sees etc. must be 'a thing that is'. (Once again we will leave problems of translation until we come to the main burden of the argument in The Sophist.) It follows (Socrates/Plato claims) that 'if he thinks, he thinks something', and 'when he thinks something, he thinks a thing that is.' Thus it is impossible to think what is not, 'either about anything that is, or absolutely.' (4).

Noting the limitations of The Theaetetus would only delay our cause. It is, however, from this rather unsatisfactory position that The Sophist begins. Let us now summarise the argument set out in Sophist 236-8 (5).

Consideration of cases intermediate between lying and truth, such as the making of images and likenesses, leads 'The Stranger' to return to the problem of what one does when one states or thinks something that is not. He refers to "the implication that 'what is not' has being; for in no other way could a falsehood come to have being" - i.e. because when it is stated it is not nothing that is stated. Parmenides is quoted as warning against this course, and we shall return to this origin of the argument, since much of The Sophist is a continuation of Parmenides' case. Parmenides had counselled not even thinking on these lines, but Plato now proceeds to do just that.

We do, 'The Stranger' claims, speak of (φθέγγεσθαι) the non-existent (τὸ μηδαμῶς ὄν). Yet this term has no application (237C). It begins to seem as if the person speaking of that which does not exist is uttering meaningless sounds. (237E). Part of this argument rests on the sense of the Greek, in which saying nothing and talking nonsense are expressed by the same phrase, ' οὐδὲν λέγειν '. (6) 'The Stranger' proceeds to investigate in more detail how it is that it is apparently impossible even to speak of something which is not (either in the sense of being false or being non-existent).

If you do try to speak of the non-existent (he says) you involve yourself at once in a contradiction. You implicitly assert, for instance, that it is either singular or plural. It is thus 'alogon', beyond expression. (There are, of course, hidden dangers in saying even this, and we shall mention them later). One cannot help being reminded of Wittgenstein's conclusion: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent."

Plato quoted Parmenides explicitly, and in order to understand what he is up to in The Sophist we shall have to investigate the course of Parmenides' thinking on this point. Unfortunately the fragments are extremely cryptic, and must have posed problems of interpretation to his contemporaries which are magnified for the modern translator. (7).

In fragment 2, starting at line 3, he distinguishes the ground of what necessarily is, from that of what is not. When he speaks of 'the one way' (ἡ μὲν ὁπῶς) he presumably means line of thought or of discourse. The one way (in this sense) which treats of what is, is the path of truth. 'The other, that it is-not and needs must not-be, that I tell thee is a path altogether unthinkable.' (8)

The word translated here as 'altogether unthinkable' is 'panapeuthea'. the prefix 'pan' giving the qualifying 'altogether': 'apeuthes - eos' literally such as cannot be enquired into: it may perhaps be rendered 'unheard of'. and so give us an alternative translation as 'altogether inconceivable'. the sense carried being both that this direction of thought is improbable to the extent of absurdity. and that it is also beyond comprehension.

The reason Parmenides makes this claim follows in the next two lines. at which Fragment 2 becomes Fragment 3. You cannot know that which is-not. "(that is impossible) nor utter it: for the same thing can be thought as can be." Literally. the translators point out. 'the same thing exists for thinking and for being': Parmenides is using the old dative sense of the infinitive:

τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἔστιν τε καὶ εἶναι

Exactly what this means remains debatable. On the face of it. and in its context. it seems that Parmenides is claiming that if something can be thought of it can also exist. This interpretation is reinforced by Fragment 6.

"That which can be spoken and thought needs must be."

(Literally: 'exists for being'. The translation 'needs must' is perhaps too strong.)

"for it is possible for it. but not for nothing. to be: that is what I bid thee ponder." (9)

There then follows in Fragment 7 the passage quoted by Plato: "For never shall this be proved, that things that are not are: but do thou hold back thy thought from this way of enquiry." (10) Line 16 of Fragment 8 seems to offer a summary of the situation: ἔστίῃ ἢ οὐκ ἔστίῃ : 'either a thing is or it is not'.

Lines 17 and 18 then provide the fullest statement available in the Fragments of the position Parmenides appears to want to hold:

κέκριται δ' οὖν, ὥσπερ ἀνάγκη,
τὴν μὲν ἔαν ἀνόητον ἀνώνυμον (οὐ γὰρ ἀληθὴς
ἔστιν ὁδός), τὴν δ' ὥστε πέλειν καὶ ἐτήτυμον εἶναι.

Kirk and Raven translate 'anoeton anonymon' as 'unthinkable and nameless'. Cornford translates: 'unthinkable, unnameable' (11). The Kirk and Raven translation of these lines reads: 'But it has surely been decided, as it must be, to leave alone the one way as unthinkable and nameless (for it is no true way), and that the other is real and true.'

There is some option open with the important word 'anoeton', since other derivatives from the same root ('noetos', 'of the mind') come to indicate intention. 'Noema', for instance, means either 'thought' or 'purpose'. It must be said that Parmenides does elsewhere use 'noema' to mean 'thought' (as a noun) (Fragment 8, line 34) since it follows in the same line the verb 'noein' in the phrase 'esti noein', 'is for thinking'.

But the sense conveyed and intended might nevertheless be that carried by its full range of usage. 'Unprofitable' or 'useless' would not carry the same implications as 'unthinkable'.

Similarly we must at least ponder the translation of 'anonymos' and note the difference between the Kirk and Raven and the Cornford versions. If taken in the sense of not having a name, rather than not having the capacity to be named, 'anonymos' implies, and therefore perhaps signifies, obscurity, elusiveness, or difficulty of conception. One might consider (for the full phrase) 'aimless and vague' or 'useless, confused', as conveying this sort of indeterminacy and unnamedness. Something without a name is, in one sense, simply ill-defined.

"It has surely been decided, as it must be, to leave alone the one way as unprofitable and conceptually problematic ..."

This would be a very different sort of message for us to receive from Parmenides via Plato. While by no means proposing this reading, we may see that (as shortly with Plato) the alternative translations happily reveal a spread of possible implications which if intended broaden the impact of the words, and if accidental nevertheless accidentally increase the scope of our thinking on the matter.

Parmenides continues with some important amplifications (if that is the word for these dense nuggets of thought) in Fragment 8, which we take up at line 34. Here it appears that there is a close and necessary correlation between being and being thought of:

ταὐτὸν δ' ἐστὶ νοεῖν τε καὶ οὔνεκεν ἔστι νόημα.

Literally: the same is for thinking and also on account of the thought it is.

We may paraphrase: the only thing that exists for thinking is the thought that it is. The plain fact is that to translate that fragment, and indeed much of Parmenides, with any confidence, you have to know already in advance what you think it means. Kirk and Raven offer: "What can be thought is only the thought that it is". (12)

They continue (line 35): "For you will not find thought without what is, in relation to which it is uttered; for there is not, nor shall be, anything else besides what is..." Parmenides' argument is avowedly circular, and we have come back to the point at which we started at Fragment 2: only what is can be thought about. But in the meantime he has apparently added the idea that only what is thought about is.

That this is all dangerous talk, or avoidance of talk, will become clear if we now return to Plato. Plato notes how the non-existent has the power to involve in immediate self-contradiction even someone denying its existence.

(Sophist 238D). He might have added that the same fate befalls someone who asserts that the non-existent is not to be thought or spoken of. For what is it that Parmenides is saying. when he says we must not talk about the non-existent? And what is Wittgenstein referring to when he advises silence on the subject of that whereof we cannot speak? What do these philosophers say when you ask them what they mean?

STRANGER: And what is it. Dr. Wittgenstein. of which you cannot speak?

Does he remain silent. lips pursed?

STRANGER: And what way is this. my dear Parmenides. which you cannot name. of which you specify that it is such that we should not think or speak of it? Tell me how you come to know so much about it.

Does he turn on his heel and walk silently out of the Agora?

Plato however does not hesitate to break Parmenides' rule in full. since in 256D he identifies a borderland where existence. what exists ('to on') can overlap with what is not ('to me on').

It is even possible (257B) to make true statements to the effect that what is not. 'is'. But here of course he is conflating negative statements. denials. with statements about the non-existent. We need not go into this. however.

Let us simply note that the terminology allows ambiguity: 'to on' can mean 'existence', 'the existent', and also can refer to something which is, in the sense (for instance) of something which is white. This sense cannot be rendered in English, and the nearest we can perhaps get to conveying Plato's range of meaning here is by translating 'to on' as 'a reality', 'onta' as 'realities', as in the sense of things which we must accept as being there ('the SDP/the nuclear deterrent/etc is a reality'). It is important to note that Plato has another word, 'pragma', for an object-like thing; and that perceptions in the mind would be expressed by him by the word 'eidos'.

With this groundwork behind us, we are now in a position to approach Plato's major point. Let us proceed to summarise the argument given in The Sophist, 243 onwards.

The early philosophers of the physical school had held that what was real was a set of principles such as Hot and Cold. Without arguing whether this is so, Plato imagines asking them whether they mean that there are three real things, Hot, Cold and reality; or whether Hot and Cold equally partake of reality, and so are the same real thing, rather than two real things.

('Real things' in these sentences is rendered by the word 'onta'). The physical pre-Socratics find themselves in a dilemma. But their predicament is to some extent shared by Parmenides himself. If he claims that reality is one ('en on', 'one real thing') then he will have to explain the apparent plurality implied by his use of two terms: there is, it seems, not only unity ('en') and identity ('on'), but then reality as well. Plato appears to enjoy this type of argument, and elaborates it in 244 and 245.

By these means he illustrates the problems which occur if one says of reality that it is two things or that it is one. What sort of thing, then, can one safely say of reality? The materialists (dealt with in 'the battle of Gods and Giants', 246-247C) say with apparent invincibility that what is real is the visible and tangible body.

But the problem with this is that (a) the materialists will have to admit that some things such as moral qualities are real but bodiless: and (b) that being so, they cannot easily explain what it is that bodied and bodiless things have in common which permits them to call them both real.

247D: "They must now tell us this: when they say that these bodiless things and the other things which have body are alike 'real', what common character that emerges as covering both sets of things have they in view?" (13)

Plato has come a long way round to this crucial point. He had to show first what sort of thing one cannot usefully say about reality. He now offers an answer which he evidently thinks may help.

"STRANGER: I suggest that anything has real being, that is so constituted as to possess any sort of power either to affect anything else or to be affected, in however small a degree, by the most insignificant agent, though it be only once. I am proposing as a mark to distinguish real things, that they are nothing but power." (14)

Let us look a little more closely at this last sentence:

τίθεμαι γὰρ ὅρον ὀρίζειν τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν οὐκ ἄλλο τι
πλὴν δύναμις.

The word 'dynamis' has a sort of technical status in the works of Plato. Cornford cites Dr. J. Souille (15) as concluding that 'dynamis' refers to the property or quality which reveals the nature of a thing. (16). That is, it is what it does, both in the sense of its doing something and what it in particular does. We have something similar in the 'affective qualities' of Aristotle (Categories 8). It is through dynamis that the nature ('physis') of something is perceivable. Dynamis is quality in action.

It is clearly difficult to render this idea adequately in English, and one may wonder whether the word 'power' in the above translation is not in fact misleading. The idea one wants to convey is that of active relatedness. Shall we try the word 'effectiveness'?

Similarly the word 'oros' carries not just the idea of a distinguishing mark but also that of a bounding line. And this is reinforced by the verb 'orizein', which might be rendered 'to delimit'. The sentence is in fact a defining one in the restricting, as well as the identifying, sense. In translating it one has a number of options: literally 'a boundary to delimit'; one might say either 'I lay down, then, a limiting boundary', true realities are ...', or 'I lay down a boundary, then, to delimit true realities'. The second part of the sentence raises even more possibilities. Here again we must conclude that no one English translation can do justice to the density of meaning packed into the Greek words. It is unlikely that Plato was being accidentally ambiguous; it is not unlikely that he wished to convey in one highly concentrated sentence a whole family of related meanings. For this reason it will be instructive to consider the possibilities, and even if this exercise results from our inadequate understanding, at this range of time, of Greek verbal convention, the thoughts provoked by pondering what Plato might have meant will all be pertinent to our subject, even if he actually meant no such thing.

Is the definition a negative one? Does it state that true realities are not things other than what has effectiveness? That is, does the boundary referred to exclude rather than enclose? This would have the merit of avoiding the risks involved in saying 'reality is ... this or that'. Plato has just shown what happens when one does that. "And countless other difficulties, each involved in measureless perplexity, will arise, if you say that the real is either two things, or only one." (17)

In this interpretation one would be able to say of anything which had no effective activity that it was not real, without being committed to making any sort of statement about reality. Let us, without in any way tying Plato to this view, bear in mind the usefulness of being able to exclude all items which do not meet the required qualifications.

Perhaps, however, he is saying something about the things he does count as being 'true realities': "they are such things, and only those, as have effectiveness." This would follow if dynamis is construed as standing for a verbal phrase, 'the effective' being abbreviated from 'what has effectiveness'. 'They are no other thing but effectiveness' could then be amplified in the above form. This in fact seems the most intelligible interpretation. It would have the advantage of being specific, and carry no risk of obscurity.

Is this thing a reality? If it is a thing which has effectiveness, yes. If it does not have effectiveness, no. It remains the fact, however, that 'dynamis' is translated, as by Cornford, as standing for nothing but itself. An abstract noun drawn from the base of the verb 'dynasthai', 'dynasthai' 'I can, am able, have power or right to', it is related to the adjective 'dynatos', meaning 'able' or 'powerful', and hence bears connotations of force. But in the conventional translation it stands for force itself, rather than for forceful things. Hence Plato appears to be saying that reality is effectiveness. Either 'true realities are nothing other than effectiveness'; or '... no other thing but effectiveness'; or 'not something other than effectiveness'. In this range we have slight variations of emphasis. But the fact remains that Plato appears to be identifying reality not with things, but with a quality.

What exactly would this mean? If, peering behind the complexities of the world, we find nothing there but an abstract noun, would we not (even though, knowing Plato, we might have expected it) feel a little cheated? Nothing has been explained, by the revelation that reality is effectiveness. What sort of idea of effectiveness can we possibly get without effective things? And surely he himself has just led us to expect that it is things, not abstractions, that 'have real being', and that they do so by virtue of 'possessing any sort of power'. (18)

Before we dismiss this interpretation as an error, however, it would be as well to consider that such claims are actually seriously made, and not only by philosophers. Take, for instance, this recent attempt to explain the state of modern physics:

In modern physics, mass is no longer associated with material substance, and hence particles are not seen as consisting of any basic 'stuff', but as bundles of energy. Energy, however, is associated with activity, with processes, and this implies that the nature of subatomic particles is intrinsically dynamic. To understand this better we must remember that these particles can be conceived only in relativistic terms, that is, in terms of a framework where space and time are fused into a four-dimensional continuum ... Their forms have to be understood dynamically, as forms in space and time. Particles are dynamic patterns, patterns of activity which have a space aspect and a time aspect ... the being of matter and its activity cannot be separated; they are but different aspects of the same space-time reality.

(19)

So there are no things; there is only activity. Several of the phrases in this passage have a curiously familiar ring, to the student of Plato, and indeed closely echo Cornford's exegesis: " ... these entities themselves can only be known in action; their action is their raison d'être: action characterises and individualises them ... This action of qualities, again, is their dynamis. The term designates at once their essence and their proper manner of manifesting themselves." (20)

What sense are we to make of all this? What does it tell us? How are we to visualise it? Perhaps the problem underlying the whole matter rests in the form of our language, which is static, and therefore ill-adapted to expressing purely dynamic states of being. It is as if we were trying to use a digital rather than an analogue computer to analyse systems dynamics. The language freezes things: the whole apparatus of nouns, adjectives and verbal cases and tenses isolates an object and a moment, rather than embracing a continuum. We sympathise suddenly with Plato's interpretation of Heraclitus: "Heraclitus somewhere says that all things are in process and nothing stays still ..." (21) But the language names the river and immobilises it on the conceptual map.

Before we proceed to summarise the situation, it would be as well to note that the bounding line referred to is something which Plato says he is proposing. This is not quite the same as claiming to have discovered or identified it. If we take the proposal to be something of the nature of a working hypothesis, then it would not be appropriate to demonstrate or refute it, but rather to test its usefulness or applicability. We shall learn a lot more about it by trying to apply it in cases of possible dispute throughout this thesis. In the next section of this chapter, for instance, putting it to use will reveal a feature which might either be a limitation or an intentional qualification. (22)

However, let us now try to see what, in Plato's terms, 'the Real' really is. To summarise by extreme simplification:

1. Things are real if and only if they have dynamis.
2. Therefore reality is inseparable from relation.
3. Therefore things are a product of relatedness.

The entailment is not stringent, of course; but it does seem that in Plato's reasoning the conclusion is that what is actually there is not any sort of reified object, but a specially consistent type of event. We will bring up this point again, in relation to the idea of 'absolute existence', in the second part of this chapter and elsewhere.

It might be objected to this account of Plato that if being affected by something is evidence of its existence, then one could argue the reality of, for instance, elves, as follows: suppose I begin to think about elves; I am affected by the idea of elves; therefore there are elves.

(23)

The weakness of this reasoning, however, resides in the lack of an intermediate step. To argue from the idea of elves to elves you would have to be able to supply the premiss 'Ideas of elves are caused by elves'. It is not enough to claim that if you are affected by an idea you are affected by the item of which it is an idea. This would be like saying that you have a photograph of the queen, therefore you have the queen. The two sets of things - an elf, for instance, and an idea - are quite unlike. They are members of different classes. One can quite well be affected by one of them without even the implication of being affected by the other.

The position we have reached here involves us in entering a new area of the subject, since the restriction of reality to relatedness, and the consequent denial of 'absolute existence', makes it necessary for us to consider the arguments for and against the school of thought known as 'phenomenalism', and hence to plot the path of thinking on and against this line, in particular the problems arising from Berkeley.

References

1. F. M. CORNFORD's translation in 'Plato's Theory of Knowledge', Routledge, 1970. p.105.
2. 186A. *ibid.* p.106
3. 186D. *ibid.* p.107.
4. 189. *ibid.* p.115.
5. CORNFORD, *op.cit.* pp.197-207.
6. CORNFORD, *op.cit.* p.205.
7. See for instance ALEXANDER P. D. MOURELATOS, "Some Alternatives in Interpreting Parmenides". *Monist*, 62. January 1979.
8. Translation by G. S. KIRK and J. E. RAVEN, 'The Presocratic Philosophers', Cambridge, 1957. p.269.
9. *Ibid.* p.270.
10. *Ibid.* p.271.
11. CORNFORD, *op. cit.* p.206.
12. KIRK and RAVEN, *op. cit.* p.277.
13. CORNFORD, *op.cit.* p.234.
14. *Loc.cit.*
15. DR. J. SOUILLE, 'Etude sur le terme dans les dialogues de Platon'. Paris, 1919. p.149.
16. CORNFORD, *op.cit.* p.234.
17. 245E. CORNFORD, *op.cit.* p.227.
18. CORNFORD, *op.cit.* p.234.
19. FRITJOF CAPRA, 'The Turning Point', Wildwood House, London, 1982. pp. 81, 82.
20. CORNFORD, *op.cit.* p.235.
21. PLATO, 'Cratylus' 402A. Trans. KIRK and RAVEN, *op.cit.* p.197.
22. See below, P.42.
23. I am indebted to Dr. Paul Helm for this objection.

If the understanding of Plato's principle requires us to think of reality in terms of relatedness or effect, then are we in danger, if we follow Plato, of having to accept a view of existence consistent with the theory, known as phenomenism, which replaces an existential assertion by a hypothetical statement about the experiences of an observer under normal conditions? Let us, to remind ourselves of the position, use Isaiah Berlin's example, in his elegant demolition of phenomenism in Mind, 1950: (1)

I say, "There is a brown table in the next room."
This, I am told, should mean a set or range of propositions of the type, "If a normal observer' were to go next door and look, he would, in normal light, under normal conditions, etc., see such and such brown-coloured data, etc."

Berlin makes the point that existential expressions have an irreducible ostensive element which cannot be conveyed by phenomenalist hypotheticals; and that their intrinsic content of categorical assertion ('there is a brown table in the other room') is equally lacking from statements about what would be the case if certain things happened. We are going to have to consider this very carefully if we propose any theory of existence based on behaviour or acquaintance, for instance on lines derived from Plato's relation-dependent interpretation.

It will be seen in a moment that the theory itself has distinct phenomenalist undertones.

The position against which phenomenism is trying to guard is one already apparently dealt with by Berkeley; we shall now see that Berkeley's analysis came to be considered unacceptable, and how this gave rise to need for the phenomenalist redescription.

Berkeley held that minds exist, and that objects exist in so far as they are perceived by minds. He cannot accept that there is any sense attributable to statements about things existing unperceived; and thus he holds that 'absolute existence' is impossible. "The absolute existence of unthinking things are words without a meaning or which include a contradiction." (2) Now since 'absolute' here means divorced from a context which includes an observer; unobserved; unperceived and unimagined; it leaves us with the problem of the table in the other room, and a whole world full of things which were real enough when we last saw them but which nobody now happens to be seeing or otherwise perceiving. (3).

Berkeley's well-known solution to this is to bring into play the mind of God. Phenomenism's reply to this rather dubious ploy is the translation into hypotheticals. Berlin's attack is as good a revelation of the inadequacy of this as we need.

The spectre remaining unexorcised in these rather strenuous manoeuvres is that of 'absolute existence'. (4).

A point made by several writers on the subject is that there is a tendency to introduce the idea of different types of existence which arises because there are existence statements of different forms. And this is a mistake which leads to further error. For instance, Professor T. R. Miles: "The temptation to speak of different 'kinds of existence' is highest where the truth or falsity of two or more sentences is known in different ways. The crucial point - on which Berkeley and Ryle are in complete agreement, is that we should not be misled by the fact that we use the word 'exist' in connection with words of many different categories into supposing that there are 'kinds of existence' in the way in which there are kinds of dog." (5)

Berlin seems to be addressing himself to a related point, though in a different way; once again we feel the implied presence of Berkeley, though now as target. Just as we should not be misled by language into thinking that existence can be of different types, so we should not be misled into thinking that there is some necessary difference, rather than an accidental one, between things which I can and cannot see.

The difference of logical form between categoricals and hypotheticals should not be confused with the purely empirical difference between observed and unobserved objects (the table next door, the back of the cupboard): "for the only relevant difference between the two types of case is that I was originally in a better position in space (or time) to describe the table in front of me. There may be important semantic differences, e.g. in learning the use of symbols for present, as opposed to absent entities, but there is no logical difference dividing sentences which describe things in my field of vision from those which describe things beyond the horizon." (6).

Berlin's attack on Berkeley is implied; phenomenism is his real foe, and Berkeley is in line of fire as its ancestor. It is therefore not clear (because it is not the subject being dealt with) what Berlin's position would be on the question of 'absolute existence'.

A more direct attack on Berkeley comes from Russell, in his chapter on Berkeley in 'The History of Western Philosophy'. And here the stand on 'absolute existence' is clear. Russell takes the view that plenty of unthinking things exist unperceived.

Russell is arguing against the claim that statements about the absolute existence of unthinking things are either meaningless or contradictory. He takes the example given by Berkeley of a house which no one is perceiving or thinking about. The claim that such a thing is conceivable contains a contradiction, according to Berkeley, since to conceive of it you have to think of it. Russell suggests the form "I can understand the proposition 'there is a house which no one perceives', or, better still, 'there is a house which no one either perceives or conceives'". (7)

"This proposition is composed entirely of intelligible words, and the words are correctly put together. Whether the proposition is true or false, I do not know; but I am sure that it cannot be said to be self-contradictory." (8).

Russell then proceeds with an interesting refutation of Berkeley, on the grounds that not only is such a proposition not contradictory, but several such propositions can actually be proved to be true.

"For instance: the number of possible multiplications of two integers is infinite, therefore there are some that have never been thought of. Berkeley's argument, if valid, would prove that this is impossible." (9)

In other words, there are some numbers that have never been thought of. But what is this supposed to mean? What form is their existence supposed to take? "Surely," comments J. A. Brunton with an understandable note of pain, "we must not talk of numbers as if they were things waiting to be counted?" (10) The point is, of course, that these numbers do not have any sort of existence at all until they are thought of. All that Russell can mean is that a number may be thought of which has not been thought of before. We know that this event remains permanently possible. Far from being a refutation of Berkeley, this is simply an observation of one of the properties of mathematics - that, like language, it is self-generating; that its self-generating capacity gives rise to infinite combinations. The fact that the proposition 'there are some (numbers) that have never been thought of' is not self-contradictory, and can even be shown to be true, has led him into endowing these numbers with a spurious identity. 'There are' in that sentence does not, of course, mean 'somewhere there exist ...' The sentence just means 'a number may be thought of which has not been thought of before.' (N)

N: Compare A. J. Ayer (11) "....not all the predicates that we use are regarded as being capable of applying to anything ... For a formalist who does not admit numbers into his ontology the expression 'being a prime number between 7 and 13' may have a meaning, but he will not allow that there is something to which it applies.

Similarly with the house which no one perceives or conceives. When Russell says that he does not know whether the statement that "there is" one is true or false, he clearly implies that it is capable of being true. Let us then ask Russell to assert that it is true, and see what follows.

Immediately I want to know more about this house. Is it for sale? Evidently it is no longer occupied. But then it cannot be for sale, since to achieve that status it would have to be known of. Is it, then, not for sale ...? If at this point Russell were to reprimand us, on the grounds that such a line of inquiry is not applicable, I would say that it is just the sort of thing that is usually applicable to a house. If he denies it to this one, I would ask him if he is really sure it is a house. He would have to fall back on saying that at least the proposition ('there is a house which no one perceives or conceives') is not self-contradictory. It is rather a matter of logical properties than of real estate.

Although Russell thinks he has avoided the alternatives of meaninglessness or self-contradiction of Berkeley's Hylas by rephrasing the assertion as "I can understand the proposition 'there is a house ...' " he may not ultimately have done so. We are entitled (as we have just been doing) to challenge him on his understanding of the proposition.

I would like to ask him now, for instance, whether he can (like Hylas) conceive of such a house. If he can, he is back with the contradiction; if he can not, then is he really sure he 'understands the proposition' that there is one? If it is for all practical purposes inconceivable, then it is absurd to say that "there is" such a thing. The contradiction has not been evaded at all, and Berkeley is supported rather than refuted.

It could be objected at this point that it is precisely because Russell cannot perceive or conceive of the house that he cannot answer questions of this sort. (11a) The claim that he can understand the proposition that 'there is a house which no-one perceives or conceives' is thus not capable of being refuted by his failure to answer questions about it. But this argument from his inability to do so only arises because we have supposed that Russell might assert that the proposition is true.

If the proposition were such that it might be true, then that state of affairs would have to be different, in some way, from its being false. Yet if Russell cannot answer any questions about this house which he nevertheless claims exists, such as the questions I could normally ask about a house that exists, then the state of affairs in which the statement is said to be true is exactly the same as the state of affairs in which the statement was false.

In that case it seems that the assertion means nothing. It may not (as Russell claims) be contradictory. But 'Socrates is equal' is not contradictory. It is simply meaningless. And this was Berkeley's alternative.

If you know nothing whatsoever about a hypothetical item, you can say nothing whatsoever about it. That seems fairly obvious. Even 'I didn't know this house existed' is a remark you cannot make until you do know. The fact is that all the rest of the time the idea of existence, as applied to the house, was not relevant to anything. What could it possibly be relevant to?

It would not be just a great waste of breath to insist on applying terms irrelevantly. It would, rather, be quite incorrect. Relevance is the essence of the correct application of a term. (N).

N: See Appendix 1, 'A Note on the Grammar of Discovery'

If we were to accept, with Plato, that talk of reality only makes sense when something or other is happening; and, with Berkeley, that talk of any in vacuo existence of objects is impossible to make sense of; and reject, versus Russell, the coherence of the idea of the existence of the undiscovered, we apparently find ourselves in an unexpectedly important position. By elimination of alternatives, things spring into being when we know of them; we thus constantly generate the universe. To claim such ability would be at least a little arrogant, and it is of course an illusion. It now becomes necessary to explain exactly why.

The concept of existence is part of our language system, and therefore tuned to our state of knowledge. (12). If it then turns out to lack applicability when divorced from a context involving knowledge, this is not the least surprising. Our language-system is, after all, our language-system. It is tied - by a thread not so much invisible as so obvious as to go unnoticed - to us.

There is nothing odd about this; there is simply no logical alternative. We could not think and talk in a way ascribable to someone or something other than us.

The medium in which we conceptualise inevitably brings restrictions and distortions; but it is necessarily the only one we have. We are normally no more aware of the medium in which we think and talk than (presumably) fish are aware of water. Only in cases such as this is it sometimes as well to note its importance.

Let us, to simplify these points, take some simple examples. Suppose the Plain Man were to say to me now: "This is all very well, I understand your point about existence being an idea designed for certain uses and therefore, not at all surprisingly, useless for other purposes; but tell me now: how does this leave this table if we both go out of the room? And when you have done that, answer this: I read in The Times that a Sino-American team of lepidopterists, penetrating a hitherto unexplored part of Manchuria, have just discovered a new type of butterfly. Was it there last week?"

I will try to answer him in simple terms, while still bearing in mind that we are trying to make sense of a position which accepts and rejects the above-mentioned points, that talk of reality only makes sense when something is happening, and that the idea of the undiscovered is not coherent.

The two cases are quite different. You and I are aware of the existence of this table, and so are in a position to make statements about it, even when absent from it - such as 'I left my briefcase on the table'. To that extent talk of its existence is assured applicability. You question my memory of the furniture of the room. 'No such table exists,' you assert. 'Of course it exists. I left my briefcase on it.' The table exists because 'existence' has application in relation to it. This is to say nothing at all about sense-data or substance. They are relevant in their own contexts, not in this.

'Is the table in the other room still hard/brown/wooden, etc.?' are questions with an inbuilt catch. I know the table in question, so that I can answer for it. In doing so I am of course referring to a table I have been able to see and touch, not to one which is (as the question tries to imply) absolutely and eternally in-the-other-room. As Berlin says, it is an accident, which can disappear if for instance the wall becomes transparent, that there is a difference between the table in front of me and that next door; it is not built into their identity. This is where your butterflies come in.

You ask: Were they there last week? Applying Plato's test we find that if they were having any sort of effect last week, they were there.

Note well that this is only any use as a means of answering the question if there is some way of telling. Presumably our international scientists, if they are worthy of their sponsorship, can tell a patch of brush which has been browsed by papilio hypotheticus from one that has not. But this is only to say that we have been lucky in our choice of example. There might have been absolutely no way of telling. Where would the usefulness of Plato's dictum be then? To say 'If they were having an effect they were there, though we do not know whether they were having it or not', is to rephrase the question rather than to answer it.

And here we encounter an interesting feature of Plato's principle referred to in the last sub-section of this chapter (13): unless 'to have effectiveness; is construed as 'to be known to have effectiveness', then the principle is, in a large number of important cases, useless. If however Plato was aware of this, then it implicitly ties ontology to epistemology. 'Dynamis', as Cornford put it (14) is the way a thing manifests its 'physis'. the way the 'physis' of it is known; and this usage clearly entails an observer. Without one there is no making-known achieved.

If this implication is intended, then the principle says something more than it appears to say. Namely, that for a thing to count as real something must be known of it. i.e. it must be known at the very least that it has dynamis. According to this reading (which I regard as inevitable if the principle is to be of use) then if something is not known to have dynamis it does not exist. It is not just that we do not know whether it exists or not. The principle proposes to lay down a bounding line: those things are real, and only those, of which we know of the dynamis. So it might be argued, on Plato's behalf. I repeat: if this is not the meaning of the principle, then we cannot use Plato's principle to help us answer questions, such as this one of the butterflies.

Berkeley would say that if they were observed by God last week, they were there. But is this not again simply to rephrase the question? Did God observe them last week? We do not know.

What, then, do we conclude?

We could not, for obvious practical reasons, say about them last week any of the things we can say about them this week; and among these is 'They are there'. This is a matter of historical accident.

No more can we now say, in the way we shall be able to next week, 'They were there last week', ('I wonder where they've gone. Sorry to have got you all up here for nothing. I swear they were right there,' and so on), referring to past experience, to first-hand knowledge - as in the case of a table one knew to the extent of leaving one's briefcase on it. There are some things one cannot say, for practical reasons. And this is indeed the point. There is no logical error in pretending to knowledge one does not have, but from a practical viewpoint it is futile. The point is that existence is a very practical matter.

Although it appears to follow from Plato's rule that for something to exist it is necessary that someone should have reason to be able to say that it exists, there is no need to convince the reader of this point in order to emphasise the practical element in existence statements. It may or may not be the case that if one cannot know whether or not something exists or existed then no sense can be attached to the assertion that it does or did. What is certain is that it can serve no conceivable purpose for someone to say that something exists if they have no reasons for making the claim.

It is true, of course, that these items, whether butterflies or the table in the other room, are the sort of objects which could have been there last week; and the inability to say of them that they were is simply a result of our state of knowledge, and has nothing to do with their reality, whether present or past. This is why it is worth stressing that pretending to knowledge one does not have is simply a waste of time, for practical reasons. There are some things one is not in a position to say. (11a)

The answer to the Plain Man's question ('Were they there last week?') must therefore be in terms of what one can say, rather than in terms of what was the case. If in principle one cannot know of their effects last week then one cannot say either that they were there or that they were not. One can answer the question affirmatively if one can know of their effects and find there to have been effects. There is an intermediate case in which one can know of their effects but have not yet found any. The Plain Man should recognise these situations, being as he is familiar with conclusions such as 'We can't say' or 'We don't know'.

References

1. Mind, 1950. pp. 295-6
2. BERKELEY, 'Principles of Human Knowledge', Everyman, p. 125.
3. See J. A. BRUNTON. 'The Absolute Existence of Unthinking Things'. Philosophy, 45. October 1970. pp. 267-280. See Appendix I below.
4. For the effects of "the absolute existence mistake" see T. R. MILES, 'Religion and the Scientific Outlook', Allen & Unwin, 1959, pp. 41, 43.
5. MILES, 'Berkeley and Ryle; some comparisons' Philosophy 1953. p. 65.
6. BERLIN, loc.cit. p. 303. For further discussion of BERKELEY's 'Principles', sections 22 and 23, see PETER S. WENZ, 'The Books in Berkeley's Closet'. Mermathena 128. Summer 1980. pp. 33-40.
7. RUSSELL, 'The History of Western Philosophy', Allen & Unwin, 1946. p. 678.
8. Loc.cit.
9. Loc.cit.
10. J. A. BRUNTON, 'Berkeley and the External World', Philosophy 1953. pp. 329-330.
11. A. J. AYER in GEACH, AYER, QUINE: 'Symposium: On What There Is?' Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume 25, 1951, p.141.
- 11a. I am indebted to Dr. Paul Helm for this objection.
12. Compare GEORGE J. STACK, 'Berkeley's Concept of Existence', (Modern Schoolman, 52. March 1976.) where he argues that whereas perception is primarily a passive process, the existence of the individual results from intentional acts of will. See also M. R. AYERS, 'Berkeley and the meaning of Existence', (History of European Ideas, 7. 1986. pp. 567 - 573.) where he argues, by contrast, regarding Berkeley's 'esse is percipi', that his epistemology is subordinate to his ontology.
13. P. 28 above.
14. CORNFORD, op.cit. p. 236.

In Chapter Two of 'Proslogion', St. Anselm sets out on the daunting task of proving, philosophically, the existence of God. We are not concerned here with whether or not he succeeded. We are concerned rather with trying to discover what St. Anselm meant, and what his successors mean, when they speak of the existence of God.

Anselm takes as a premiss that God is 'aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit' - something than which nothing greater can be thought. Even the fool who says 'There is no God' understands this phrase, though he is committed to denying that it has a referent. But whatever is understood is in the understanding. For Anselm this being in the understanding constitutes something different to not being at all, since he says that God so defined must therefore 'exist at least' in the understanding. ('esse vel in intellectu'). (1)

'Quidquid intelligitur in intellectu est'. Whatever is understood is in the understanding. But it is one thing for an object to be in the understanding ('in intellectu') and another thing for it to be understood to exist. We thus have a general category, things each of which can be thought of ('cogitatur'), subdivided into things which one has in one's understanding ('habet in intellectu'), and things which one has in one's understanding which one also understands to exist ('intelligat esse').

Anselm gives the example of a painter: 1. He thinks of what he is going to paint: he has it in his understanding. 2. He paints it, and it now exists as well as being in his understanding. The second is something more than the first.

Resisting the temptation to pursue with Anselm the results of this analysis, let us examine his distinction a little more closely, since a point raised here may well prove relevant to the ensuing discussion.

Anselm goes on in Chapter 4 of the 'Proslogion' to distinguish two senses of 'think'. " ... it is clear that something can be said in one's heart or thought in more than one way. For we think ('cogitare') of a thing, in one sense, when we think of the word that signifies it, and in another sense, when we understand the very thing itself. ('cum id ipsum quod res est intelligitur'). Thus, in the first sense God can be thought of as nonexistent, but in the second sense this is quite impossible." (2)

Shall we call these two senses of 'think' the general and the special senses? Now it seems for reasons given below that the general sense is such that it does not commit the thinker to holding that the item thought of exists.

The special sense is based on the understanding of something which has logical status, such as the outcome of reasoning, and so does involve the acceptance of the existence of the item thought of. In the general sense, Anselm says, one can think of a certain thing as not existing, even when it does exist. In the special sense the thing thought of is understood, and therefore exists as something in the understanding. He reinforces this distinction and its effects by saying that "although none of the things that exist can be understood ('intelligi') not to exist, still they can all be thought of ('cogitari') as nonexistent." (3). Nothing could be clearer than this distinction between things which are thought of in a way involving understanding, and things which are just thought of.

The impossibility of thinking of God as nonexistent, in the special sense of 'think', he explains, arises because God's attributes are so defined as to involve the understanding, and because as understood he must possess existence by logical necessity: ... it now seems obvious that this being than which a greater cannot be thought cannot be thought of as nonexistent, because it exists by such a sure reason of truth." (4).

It might be argued against this interpretation - which holds that for Anselm something can be thought of but not exist, even in the understanding - that he is ambiguous in his use of the word 'exist'. He certainly distinguishes between things which "exist at least" in the understanding ('esse vel in intellectu') and those which exist "in reality". ('esse et in re'). (5). Of course it is possible that when Anselm says that something can be thought of as nonexistent, he intends "as not existing in reality". and implies that it nevertheless exists in the understanding by virtue of being thought of. But this will not at all square with the sentence quoted above: "although none of the things which exist can be understood not to exist, still they can all be thought of as nonexistent." If to be thought of and to exist in the understanding were one and the same state of affairs, this sentence could not make a crucial distinction between the two.

In the general sense then something can be thought of as non-existent. It follows (though Anselm does not say this) that it is possible to think of things which do not exist. It therefore also follows that thinking of something does not thereby entail its existence. This is the general ground against which things which are understood are said by Anselm to exist in the understanding.

We may now see how this analysis, on which Anselm embarked after presenting his argument, applies to the terms he used at the start of the discussion itself. (It is as if he had realised that he had started with an implicit distinction, which he then decided to make explicit).

We believe, he said, that God is "a being than which none greater can be thought". (6) The fool says in his heart that there is no God. The fool however "hears what I am saying - 'A being than which none greater can be thought'". (7) In the light of the discussion in Chapter 4 of the 'Proslogion', we know that all this so far is applying the general sense of 'thought'. The analysis in that chapter is specifically addressed to this passage. (8) God is a being than which none greater can be thought, in the general sense of 'thought'. The fool saying in his heart that God is nonexistent is thinking that, in that sense. And when he hears the words he is partaking in the type of thinking described in Chapter 4: "we think of a thing, in the sense, when we think of the word that signifies it ...". (9) We know that it is this general sense of think that is applicable, because the involvement of understanding has not yet become a part of the process. That forms the next step.

Now for the application of the special sense. "But when this same fool hears what I am saying - 'A being than which none greater can be thought' - he understands what he hears ..." (10) He is now involved in the special sense which is described in the above sentence with the words " ... and in another sense, when we understand the very thing itself." (11) The thing then exists as something understood, even if that is the only type of existence it has.

There may therefore be some things which can be thought of which do not exist, even in the understanding. Indeed, for the purposes of Anselm's argument there must be, or there would be no point in specifying that the concept Anselm is concerned with achieves that status of existing in the understanding. This is a crucial and (it will turn out) far-reaching point made implicitly by Anselm at this early stage. Anselm would not have introduced the idea that the God-denying fool nevertheless understood his phrase if he did not wish to draw an initial distinction: he has it in his understanding, as the painter has the unpainted painting. There is then a further level, represented by the painted painting, covering those things which may not only be thought of and exist in the understanding, but also exist in reality.

(Anselm reinforces existence at this point by 'in reality' ('esse et in re'), no doubt meaning to refer to the world not enclosed within the understanding. We shall have to deal with the terminology involved shortly. At this point it is sufficient to note Anselm's usage.)

Perhaps it is because Anselm's argument for the existence of God actually relies on a clear perception of the second distinction, (between being in the understanding and being in reality) that subsequent philosophers (and indeed prior ones, as we shall see) have consistently missed the importance of the first one (between being thought of and existing in understanding). Because of the part this omission has played in bringing into philosophy some of the problems we are here setting out to solve, it might be as well to go over this again.

God is a thing than which none greater can be thought. There is thus an unspecified, possibly infinite, field of things which can be thought. But this particular concept has a characteristic evidently not shared by all such things, since it exists in the understanding.

It exists at least in the understanding. Anselm then goes on to show that it must exist not only in the understanding but in some other form. The problem arises, however, if the first step is not noticed, and it is thought that Anselm is saying that everything that is thought of exists in the understanding.

But when he says that the fool understands the concept, which is therefore in his understanding, he does not mean that the fool understands the words, in the sense of speaking Anselm's type of Latin. A few sentences later he uses the phrase 'quidquid intelligitur in intellectu est'; supporting this with the example of the painter makes it clear that 'understood' here means something like 'perceived' or 'grasped'. When the painter forms a coherent impression of the painting he is about to start, 'he has it in his understanding' in that sense.

There is an important category of things to which this particular specification might apply. They exist in the understanding, but only there. Shall we call them theoretical constructs? They perhaps include things such as numbers, classes, universals; but they will be considered in some detail later, and it would be as well to avoid being too specific about them until then. It is sufficient for the time being to note that such a type of thing is accommodated by Anselm's formulation.

Anselm distinguishes, then, firstly things which may be thought of from things which may be thought of and which exist in the understanding; secondly, things which exist in the understanding from things which exist in the understanding and also in reality. (N)

In order, now, to identify the type of problem which we are setting out to deal with, we may take two examples of the treatment of existence and reality from modern philosophy; and the comparison of these with Anselm's treatment will, at the same time, show how problems may arise.

N: While it is here contended that the evidence cited above demonstrates that Anselm intended these two distinctions, it would be sufficient for our subsequent purposes if all that was accepted, from the foregoing argument, was that the terminology of thinking and existing permits the first distinction as well as the generally-acknowledged second one, regardless of whether or not Anselm meant to say so.

Norman Malcolm: 'Anselm's Ontological Arguments'. (12)

Malcolm starts by outlining Anselm's argument, up to the point about what is understood being in the understanding. He then says: "Of course many things may exist in the understanding that do not exist in reality; for example, elves." (13) Now this, if the above reading of Anselm is right, is exactly what Anselm was not saying. Malcolm has missed the point, and with fatal consequences.

Elves may be thought of, or as we might say, imagined. This is distinct from the sort of thing, such as the being a greater than which cannot be thought, which are understood, and therefore are in the understanding. Perhaps the trouble arises with the translation of 'intellectus'. If Anselm had meant 'imagination' he would have said so; there is a perfectly good Latin word available: 'imaginatio'. If he had meant 'mind', likewise, he would have used the word 'mens, mentis'. It is not the ability to think of something that is being referred to, but the ability to grasp or comprehend it. 'Intellectus' is the faculty by which we recognise the significance of prime numbers or square roots, but not of elves.

To put it another way: there is no process in logic or in any other nomology impelling the recognition of elves.

Elves are by no means alone in this - one would not wish to be discriminatory - and we shall see in fact both shortly and at a later point that they inhabit a vast world of ideas outside the category Anselm meant by things 'in intellectu'. The point here, however, is that by failing to spot the initial distinction, Malcolm has put himself in the position of investing elves, in (as he thought) Anselm's terms, with a sort of spurious existence.

The rest of Malcolm's paper, though undermined by his initial misunderstanding, deals with the validity of Anselm's proof of the existence of God, and so need not concern us. The second example of the coming into being of a major problem reinforces the point identified in the first.

G. E. Moore: (14)

Moore is considering the notion of time. In Chapter XI he asks the question 'Is Time Real?'. This leads him to embark in Chapter XII on 'The meaning of "Real"', and in the meantime to consider the distinction between the real and the imaginary. He wonders whether what one imagines has existence by virtue of being something one imagines. (15) Griffins, chimaeras, centaurs: these can be imagined. "And to imagine a centaur is certainly not the same thing as imagining nothing." (16)

And so on. The argument is familiar. It can lead to the decision that existence is an extra element added on to some other sort of identity, and Moore considers that sort of explanation, among others. "The difference is that griffins are or exist only in the mind or in dependence on it, whereas elephants are or exist not only in the mind but independently of it." (17)

From this we may see that Moore came close to recognising Anselm's distinction. Yet evidently he did not come close enough, since it was then necessary for him to pursue the matter of griffins and centaurs through a further eight pages. For Anselm did not find it necessary to say that everything that you may think of exists in thought: to him that would probably devalue the term 'exists' beyond use. He was recognising a sort of existence which is not 'in reality', but is an existence of the understanding. Now if any element of understanding applies to griffins and centaurs, it must be that they are understood not to exist: they therefore do not exist even in the understanding. If one wants to say that they are there in some way in the mind or the imagination, then existence is not a suitable term to apply to that state.

In fact it is ruled out by the presence of two factors incompatible with it: (a) that we have just said that the point about griffins and centaurs is that they are understood not to exist; and (b) by locating them in the imagination (Moore: "I certainly can imagine a centaur: we can all imagine one.") (18) we are in effect saying that they are neither in the understanding nor in reality.

In relation to items in those two fields Anselm would consider it meaningful to talk of existence; but imagination is to be contrasted with them.

To develop a little the position derived from Anselm but expanded by this example from Moore: among the things which may be thought of (an unspecified class) there are some which may be imagined, and some which may be comprehended; the latter are imbued, by that fact, with existence in comprehension. It is incorrect, and leads to endless problems, to apply the term existence to the former. Indeed it would not be meaningful to make the distinction between things which exist because they are comprehended and things which are not so comprehended and so do not exist, if the term 'existence' could be used in association with the incompatible word 'imagination' as well as with the translation of 'intellectus'.

In case his distinction between understanding and imagining is not clear, it is worth stressing again Anselm's use of the word 'intellectus'. We have said above (19) that 'intellectus' is the faculty by which we recognise the significance of prime numbers and square roots, but not of elves. We know that when Anselm uses the word (as in 'quidquid intelligitur in intellectu est' - meaning 'such things as may be grasped by the intellectual faculty have being within that faculty') he is referring to things that can be worked out, that can be comprehended by rational thought. We know this because he explicitly contrasts this process with just thinking of something. (20)

It is in this sense that we do not understand griffins just by thinking of them. If on the other hand we had worked out that there must be griffins, then we would have understood them, in Anselm's sense. If there is any working out involved here, however, it must result in the conclusion that griffins do not exist, so that all we may be said to understand about them is that they are fictional.

Fictional or imaginary things are of course the sort of thing that Anselm meant when he spoke of just thinking of something, as contrasted with grasping it intellectually.

To say that what can be merely imagined exists in the understanding might be quite acceptable in terms of some other terminology, but it is directly contrary to the points that Anselm is making. Given his emphasis on intellectus, 'in intellectu', representing the faculty by which one works things out, it is mere confusion of words to say that what is imagined exists in the understanding.

It must be said, before leaving this example, that Moore compounds his difficulty through a willingness to accept as meaningful the loose terminology which surrounds this question. If a centaur is "something, isn't that the same thing as saying that there is such a thing - that it is or has being?" But if centaurs thus are, yet still they are not real. (21) He thus distinguished being real from being, and equates being real with existing. (22).

We are going to come across again this apparent desire to confuse the issue: does such-and-such a philosopher mean something more by 'real existence' than by 'existence'? Did Anselm mean to add something to the sense of existence when he distinguished 'existence in reality' from some other form? Would we be right to follow some philosophers off this route on a detour into the realms of truth and fact? It will help things considerably if we dispose of this tangled complex at once, treating it as such a mixture of metaphors deserves: that is, by using Occam's razor to cut the Gordian Knot.

Either there are centaurs or there are not. It makes no difference, either to the state of the world or to the present argument, if you want to paraphrase that statement using other terms, such as 'exist', 'are real', 'are a fact'. The situation remains the same. Either centaurs exist or they do not.

Neither should we be led into further involvement by the addition of a qualification: 'either there are (in some sense) centaurs or there are not' can be replaced by some other phrase without altering the argument or the state of affairs, as 'either centaurs exist in some sense ... ', or 'are real in some sense ... ' and so on. It will become necessary to make a fine distinction (and we have already seen one made by Anselm) between different ways of existing. It will be possible to be precise about this in due course. But nothing would be gained by allocating one of these other terms to one mode or degree, one to another. If there are different ways of existing, these are different ways of being, or being real. To say that something can be, but not be real, is one way of setting up for oneself an endless problem. It is to be avoided because it leads to confusion and unnecessary discussion; but it is to be avoided anyway because it is fundamentally paradoxical. It is equivalent to saying that there are centaurs and there are not.

It is clear from the above examples that we commonly wish to be able to say, both in philosophy and ordinary discourse, that certain things exist; and that there is therefore a difference between existing and not existing. Moreover we can all think of things which we wish to say do not exist. And we need to be able to say this without being forced into self-contradiction.

Moreover it is also clear that no problem would arise with respect to these distinctions if there were some ready-made and agreed way in which we could decide whether or not something exists. It is our apparent ability to decide without knowing how we do so that gives rise to the problem. It leads us, or at any rate it leads philosophers, to find themselves saying that something which does not exist, must, by virtue of having been called 'something', somehow exist. This is plainly a ridiculous state of affairs and must be sorted out.

(At a later stage we shall see how the problem is shifted, but not destroyed, by the refinement of posited entities into names and descriptions).

The Anselm example highlights the difficulty caused by the lack of readily-available criteria, by taking an apparently undecided case. If Anselm says that God exists, and the fool says in his heart that God does not, the dispute between them would disappear if they were both able to say how the issue is to be decided. But by what procedure is this dispute to be settled? Clearly a first step towards such an outcome would be for them to be able to say (and agree) what they mean by 'exists'. The existence of God is thus a case where disputes may genuinely arise, and is also a deciding test for the meaning of statements about existence. If this case can be clarified, one feels, less marginal existence disputes will also have become clear.

References

1. Loc.cit. See Appendix II for text.
2. Trans E. R. FAIRWEATHER, reprinted in J. Hick (ed.) 'The Existence of God',. Macmillan 1964, p.27.
3. From 'Reply to Gaunilo', 4. *ibid.* p. 29. My emphasis.
4. *Ibid.* p. 28.
5. *Ibid.* p. 26.
6. *Ibid.* p. 25.
7. Loc.cit. My emphasis.
8. *Ibid.* p.27.
9. *Ibid.* p. 27.
10. *Ibid.* p. 25. My emphasis.
11. *Ibid.* p. 27.
12. NORMAN MALCOLM: 'Anselm's Ontological Arguments' first published in 'The Philosophical Review', January 1960. Reprinted in 'The Existence of God' ed John Hick, Macmillan 1964, and 'Religion and Understanding' ed. D. Z. Phillips, Blackwell 1967.
13. Macmillan paperback edition, 1973. p. 48.
14. G. E. MOORE, 'Some Main Problems of Philosophy' Allen & Unwin, 1953.
15. pp. 212, 213.
16. p. 212.
17. p. 225.
18. p. 212.
19. Above, p. 53.
20. See p. 50, above.
21. p. 213.
22. p. 214.

It is hoped that the foregoing examples have successfully illustrated the prevalence of a group of problems, namely that it is not clear, in philosophy, what is intended when it is asserted of something that it exists, how such claims are to be determined, whether existence is to be regarded as (as it were) free-standing, or as relative to a subject or context, and a number of other side-effect difficulties. Before we set out to seek a solution to this bunch of related problems, which will no doubt breed during this process, it will be as well to enquire whether the matter has already been satisfactorily dealt with. {Plato, we saw, left us with difficulties very similar to those we had before he came to our assistance. Is this, one wonders, a portent of future predicaments?} We therefore turn now to a consideration of a number of attempted solutions.

Russell's Theory of Descriptions

There is no doubt that Bertrand Russell thought he had disposed of the question of existence statements once and for all. If this were correct, then of course the subsequent literature on the subject should not have been composed, and our present exercise would be redundant too. We implicitly start from the supposition that he was mistaken, and it is therefore important to understand why.

But first, Russell's case.

The 'Theory of Descriptions' is first stated in his paper 'On Denoting', published in Mind in 1905, and later reprinted in the collection of Essays 'Logic and Knowledge' (1), from which present references are taken. The theory was developed to become a major feature of the first volume of Principia Mathematica, which appeared in 1910. Let us now see what prompted Russell to produce the theory in the first place, how the theory is formulated and applied, and what consequences follow.

Russell's problem is that whereas descriptive terms ('denoting phrases') appear by their form to be designed to stand for some object, there are some which do and some which do not. It had puzzled philosophers as to how this could be so. 'The present King of England is fat' was a statement which could be true or false by virtue of the way in which the denoting phrase forming part of it stood for an object; 'the present King of France is fat' is of the same form, and so should work in the same way. Philosophers felt obliged to conclude that its denoting phrase must also stand for an object. "Thus 'the present King of France', 'the round square', etc., are supposed to be genuine objects." (2). Russell found the consequences of this "intolerable: and if any theory can be found to avoid this result, it is surely to be preferred." (3)

If this problem arises with descriptive phrases, it is even more pronounced in the case of names. Indeed Russell considered in a later series of lectures ('The Philosophy of Logical Atomism', 1918) (4) that to be truly a name, rather than "a sort of truncated description" a word has to stand for something real, "because a name has got to name something or it is not a name." (5)

Russell's solution was to reduce both denoting phrases and apparent names to what he called propositional functions. The effect of this is to rephrase a sentence which contained a denoting phrase or a name in such a way that this disappears, and in its place is a construction involving a variable and an ascription of a property. Russell had good reasons for proposing what he frankly called "a somewhat incredible interpretation" (6), in that it cleared up a whole range of puzzles. It is, however, so elaborate in its form that even Russell did not attempt to describe it, but instead relied on examples. To take the most familiar one: the sentence "Scott was the author of Waverley" becomes "It is not always false of x that x wrote Waverley, that it is always true of y that if y wrote Waverley y is identical with x , and that Scott is identical with x ". (7).

Knowing as we do that Bertrand Russell was endowed with a sense of humour, our initial reaction must be to conclude that he was joking. But no; in fact he regarded this analysis as providing something of a philosophical panacea. "The whole realm of non-entities, such as 'the round square', 'the even prime other than 2', 'Apollo', 'Hamlet', etc.. can now be satisfactorily dealt with." (8). It clears up, among other things, the problem of the French monarchy. (9)

Moreover (and this is why we are discussing it) it is crucially helpful in overcoming the problematic side of existence statements. There is no doubt that Russell saw this function as one of the theory's greatest achievements. He puts the case for the application of his formula to existence statements in the later lectures, 'The Philosophy of Logical Atomism'. "When you take any propositional function and assert of it that it is possible, that it is sometimes true, that gives you the fundamental meaning of 'existence'. You may express it by saying that there is at least one value of x for which that propositional function is true ... To say that unicorns exist is simply to say that '(x is a unicorn) is possible'". (10).

Existence is thus reduced to being a property of a propositional function. The benefits of this become apparent when one applies the principle to awkward cases, such as statements about non-existents. Instead of saying "The golden mountain does not exist", with the paradox of appearing to say something about the golden mountain, one says with Russell's mechanism (to use his admittedly rather loose terminology) "There is no entity such that ' x is golden and mountainous' is true when x is c , but not otherwise." (11). Russell sees this as a considerable breakthrough, as far as existence statements are concerned. "This clears up two millennia of muddle-headedness about 'existence', beginning with Plato's Theaetetus." (12). Quite an achievement, we may feel.

There is one further consequence of the working of the theory which is relevant to our inquiry, and that is its application to the question of the existence of God. It has been shown that descriptions are reducible to propositional functions; names on the other hand do not occur at all in correctly formulated existence statements. "'Existence', according to this theory, can only be asserted of descriptions. We can say 'The author of Waverley exists,' but to say 'Scott exists' is bad grammar, or rather bad syntax." (13). The qualification is due to an earlier claim that "a great part of philosophy can be reduced to something that may be called 'syntax' " (14). When reviewing this section of his work in 'My Philosophical Development' (15) Russell does not insist on this distinction between grammar and syntax. "We can say 'the author of Waverley exists' and we can say 'Scott is the author of Waverley,' but 'Scott exists' is bad grammar."

Returning to 'The Philosophy of Logical Atomism', let us now see how this grammatical analysis applies to God. Russell claims (16) that "The fact that you can discuss the proposition 'God exists' is a proof that 'God', as used in that proposition, is a description and not a name. If 'God', were a name, no question as to existence could arise." He does not pursue the matter, yet we feel that this brief conclusion indicates much of the motive behind the talk of Scott and the author of Waverley.

Clearly. on Russell's previous reasoning. 'God exists' would be bad grammar if God were a name. Yet if 'God' is a description then God-existence statements can be transformed by means of propositional functions in such a way that the constituent 'God' disappears. "When I say 'the author of Waverley exists', I mean that there is an entity c such that ' x wrote Waverley' is true when x is c and is false when x is not c . 'The author of Waverley' as a constituent has quite disappeared here, so that when I say 'The author of Waverley exists' I am not saying anything about the author of Waverley. You have instead this elaborate to-do with propositional functions, and 'the author of Waverley' has disappeared. That is why it is possible to say significantly 'The author of Waverley did not exist'. (17).

Shall we try this for ourselves? Let us say that 'God' is shorthand for 'the creator of the world'. Then when we say 'God exists', Russell would interpret our statement as follows: "There is an entity c such that ' x created the world' is true when x is c , and is false when x is not c . And God is identical with c ." (N).

N: I repeat here Russell's habit of using ' c ' instead of some other letter, in spite of the misleading implication that we are referring to a constant.

Now a number of questions all present themselves for attention at the same time, but we shall have to try to keep calm. Firstly, I would like to ask about the status of that first "is", in the opening phrase "There is ...". Does it mean the same as 'exists'? If not, what sort of information can it possibly give us? But if so, then I suspect that we are involved in an endless regress.

'An entity *c* with certain properties about to be specified exists', or, so simplify, 'An entity *c* with properties *p*, *q* exists', now has to be reinterpreted as follows. "There is an entity *d* such that '*x* has properties *p*, *q*' is true when *x* is *d*, and is false when *x* is not *d*. And *c* is identical with *d*." But wait; we have said 'There is' again, meaning 'There exists',, so we have to clarify this further. And so on. Quite apart from the tedium of going on until we have run out of letters of the alphabet, it is difficult to see where this is going to get us.

It is true that this difficulty arises from the looseness of Russell's form of statement. Had he constructed instead a statement of the form '"*x* is - " is true for at least one value of the variable *x*', the regress might have been avoided.

We could then say "'x is a creator of the universe" is true for at least one value of the variable x', and in order to accommodate 'the creator of the universe' we could add "'x is a creator of the universe" is true for only one value of the variable x'. But what would have been achieved? We would have replaced a statement about what there is by a statement about what is true. For the sake of the original formality of avoiding 'exists' in the sentence 'the creator of the universe exists' (or whatever), we would have embarked on a rather devious, and possible specious, circumlocution. The assertion of the truth of a predication to a variable for at least, or for only, one value of that variable gives one much the same uncomfortable feeling as one had before. Are truth statements really immune from the diseases of existence statements? And can they really be cashed without loss, one for the other? While recognising that these questions are likely to occur again, and may require further investigation, we should not allow them at this point to distract our attention from Russell. We have to bear in mind that although the above exercise was what Russell might have done, it was not what Russell did.

The crucial test of any philosophical theory is to ask whether it leaves us philosophically any better off. We have seen that Russell claimed that the theory of descriptions had problem-solving, or problem-avoiding, capacities.

To replace a statement about a descriptive phrase by a statement about the value of a variable, and then to add that the descriptive phrase is that value of that variable, does not, looked at in the clear light of day, seem likely to avoid any problems. And this is particularly so when it sometimes produces a sentence including the phrase 'there is' in place of one including the phrase 'there exists', as part of its mechanism.

This is a serious state of affairs; but it is not the only basis of possible doubts about the usefulness, in this field, of Russell's theory of descriptions. We may wish to know, as before, what he is really trying to say. Does he mean that if one applies a process of linguistic analysis, 'N exists' turns out to be of some other form, which he then specifies? The form, of course, is dependent on the form of the technical rules imposed, so that the sentence could equally well be translated into any sort of code or language: and the supposed discovery is therefore really a tautology. It says that if you adopt this particular code of interpretation, this is the result you get with sentences like this. And this information is trivial. It has absolutely no effect on our knowledge or understanding of the world.

But does Russell perhaps intend much more than this? One would gather from his presentation of the theory and his insistence on its therapeutic effects that he did. Is this perhaps what he really means: that those who go around making statements such as 'God exists', or 'God does not exist', or even (in extreme cases) 'Scott is the author of Waverley' are all the time, unknown to themselves, in error? Does he mean that all the time they have been ungrammatical, or unsyntactical, without knowing it, rather as Molière's Monsieur Jourdain had all the time been speaking prose? Does he mean that if only they knew better they would be saying things like 'There is an x such that ...'? That this is really what they are trying to say, what they mean, and only their benighted ignorance obstructs such true expression? That they would be better able to express their intentions satisfactorily if they changed their ways? And presumably, therefore, that this is the sort of thing that is said by the grammatical (or syntactical) élite?

One grows increasingly sceptical of philosophers who tell people that they should not be saying what they are saying, but something else. In a way it is a self-defeating criticism, since by the time it is made it is too late for it to be useful.

But let us say that this argument is wrong, and that Russell's analysis does make a genuine semantic point - a question of what the words mean - and that whenever people say 'N exists' it would be a clearer expression of what they intend if they phrased the statement in the longer way, but nobody actually does that because the cruder, less accurate phrase is shorter. One talks, for instance, of 'The Wealth of Nations', in most cases without being aware that the work one is referring to is in fact called 'An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations'. Now doubtless the latter form is really more correct, but the fact that one used the shorter form instead in no way altered the significance of what one said about it: everything you say about 'The Wealth of Nations' is as true or untrue as it would be if you used the full title. It follows therefore that no puzzles on the subject could be resolved, no errors avoided, no "two millennia of muddle-headedness" cleared up, by adopting a more long-winded form of the same expression of meaning.

Moreover we only have to look round us to see that errors of grammar (or syntax) do not affect meaning. 'Between you and I' works every bit as well as 'between you and me', though it is undoubtedly wrong; and if 'Scott exists' were wrong in some such way it would make absolutely no difference to the way in which it is used and the consequences of using it. Pronouncements do not become nonsense, it appears, just because they are incorrectly formulated.

If, then, the matter is really one of the relation of semantic significance to grammar or syntax it is of no interest. And if it is one of academic linguistic analysis it is of no consequence. In its claim to avoid the pitfalls of existence statements it turns out to be wrong, and as a problem-solving mechanism it seems likely to be unusable.

References

1. Allen & Unwin. 1956
2. Op.cit. p.45.
3. Ibid.
4. Op.cit. p. 177 ff.
5. Op.cit. p. 243.
6. Op.cit. p. 44.
7. Op.cit. p. 51.
8. Op.cit. p.54.
9. Op.cit. p. 251.
10. Op.cit. pp. 232-233.
11. 'The History of Western Philosophy'. Allen & Unwin. 1946. p. 860.
12. Ibid.
13. Loc.cit.
14. Op.cit. p. 859.
15. Allen & Unwin, 1959, p. 85.
16. 'Logic and Knowledge'. p. 250.
17. Loc.cit.
18. The possible uses of Russell's formulation are further examined below, pp. 180. ff. See also the discussion in units 5-6 of 'Thought and Reality': Central Themes in Wittgenstein's Philosophy. BROWN, S. 'Realism and Logical Analysis' Open University Press, 1976.

There is an area of common concern between semantics (the study of meaning) and ontology (the theory of being) which leads to the question of what, if any, relationship there is between them. It would not be surprising if philosophy concluded that they cannot impinge on one another, since they deal with different matters. A lot of work in this area has been done by Quine and Carnap, and this is not quite the conclusion which they appear to reach. Quine, for instance, as we shall shortly see in detail, claims that one can commit oneself to an ontology by means of what one says. Carnap's approach reduces the matter to a choice of language system, so that questions of ontology do not occur.

The relevant works of Quine and Carnap form a dialogue or duet rather than a one-way process of influence. They are, for one thing, historically contemporary. They frequently refer to each other, occasionally in disagreement; in general they are singing the same song, and in moderately close harmony.

The papers in question, to which reference will be made in this chapter, are as follows:

- I. QUINE, Willard van Orman, 'On What There Is'. 1948 (1)
- II. CARNAP, Rudolf. 'Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology' 1950 (2).
- III. QUINE. 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism' 1951 (3)

Let us start by following the course of thinking conveyed by these three papers.

Quine starts, much as Russell did, with the apparent problem that denying the existence of something seems to entail reference to a something which is not. (4) This leads him to remark, usefully, that some terms (such as 'Pegasus') have "spatio-temporal connotations", and some (such as 'the cube root of 27') do not. (5) He follows Russell further in seeing a solution in analysis in terms of 'bound variables' (such as 'something', 'nothing') by means of which the descriptive phrase which might have caused problems disappears from the statement. (6). It is therefore not names or descriptions that should concern us when we ask ontological questions, since both can be made to disappear. (7).

Thus it appears to be reference which determines being; "to be is to be in the range of reference of a pronoun." Or, more basically, "To be is, purely and simply, to be the value of a variable." (8). To what extent, then, does what we say commit us to an assertion of what there is? Quine at this point seems to think that it always does, but that our commitment may be varied with our statements. This is at least consistent. When we make a statement about (for instance) the characteristics of some zoological species, "we are committing ourselves to recognizing as entities the several species themselves, abstract though they be.

We remain so committed at least until we devise some way of so paraphrasing the statement as to show that the seeming reference ... was an avoidable manner of speaking.". (9).

Does this therefore mean that things can be eliminated from reality purely by paraphrase? Or alternatively does Quine mean by 'recognizing as entities' only something as trivial as 'talking about'? 'We talk about things that we talk about' sounds somewhat less interesting.

Quine seems to back down hastily from the former possible interpretation, that things can be brought into existence by statement and eliminated again by paraphrase, and to settle for the second less exciting one. "Now how are we to adjudicate among rival ontologies?" he asks promisingly. (10). "Certainly the answer is not provided by the semantical formula" - the one, incidentally, which he had given two pages earlier - " 'To be is to be the value of a variable' ... We look to bound variables in connection with ontology not in order to know what there is, but in order to know what a given remark or doctrine, ours or someone else's, says there is; and this much is quite properly a problem involving language. But what there is is another question." (11). (That, indeed, is what he has, in opening, called "the ontological problem" (12)). Later on p. 203 Quine reinforces this position very firmly, with the sentence "we must not jump to the conclusion that what there is depends on words."

Although this seems to be a betrayal of the trend of his argument so far. if the above is a fair summary of that. this is a position on which Quine will remain steadfast, and therefore one which we must examine seriously. Elsewhere ('Logic and the Reification of Universals', a paper written mainly in 1947 and revised in the early 1950's) he attempts to clarify the consequences of this stand. (13).

I am not suggesting a dependence of being upon language. What is under consideration is not the ontological commitments of a discourse. What there is does not in general depend on one's use of language, but what one says there is does.

We shall return to these words. Dealing at this point with the doubts to which they give rise (the unease generated, for instance, by that phrase 'in general') would obstruct the present exposition of the Quine-Carnap argument. Let us therefore try to disentangle the position now attained by Quine.

1. Statements can give rise to ontological commitments.
2. Such commitments however are not a measure of what there is, but a delineation of what we say there is.

Quine continues as follows. . . . Accepting an ontology is like adopting a scientific theory. We have reasons for adopting one rather than another, chiefly the desire for "the simplest conceptual scheme into which the disordered fragments of raw experience can be fitted and arranged." (14). (N). In constructing a "conceptual scheme" simplicity is the overriding criterion. (18). "By bringing together scattered sense events and treating them as perceptions of one object, we reduce the complexity of our stream of experience to a manageable conceptual simplicity." (19).

N: Perhaps Quine's severest critic is Ilham Dilman, whose book 'Quine on Ontology. Necessity and Experience. A Philosophical Critique' (15) points to some crucial internal contradictions in Quine's work. He questions, for instance, the coherence of Quine's talk of 'raw reality'. This implies "an ontology which is not relative to a particular language." But if Quine "thinks of the idea of an absolute ontology as confused, then what does he mean by 'raw'?" (16) "Surely," Dilman says earlier, "where it makes sense to speak of ordering there must be something that is ordered ...". (17)

Quine refers to physical objects as "postulated entities", comparable to the notion of irrational numbers, having "the status of a convenient myth".(20). (N) This is a term he resorts to elsewhere, in the important paper 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism', which we shall be discussing shortly:

N: Ayer comments (21) on this procedure: "No doubt we can rid ourselves of abstract entities, or even of physical objects, by so limiting our use of the word 'exists' that we can consistently label them as 'convenient myths', but this does not prove that they really have no being. For what right have we to assume that nothing exists but what can be experienced? If someone wishes to have a more generous ontology, how can we refute him except on the basis of definitions which he is at liberty to reject? May he not even be right?"

Physical objects are conceptually imported into the situation as convenient intermediaries - not by definition in terms of experience, but simply as irreducible posits comparable, epistemologically, to the gods of Homer. For my part I do, qua lay physicist, believe in physical objects and not in Homer's gods; and I consider it a scientific error to believe otherwise. But in point of epistemological footing the physical objects and the gods differ only in degree and not in kind. Both sorts of entities enter our conception only as cultural posits.

The myth of physical objects is epistemologically superior to most in that it has proved more efficacious than other myths as a device for working a manageable structure into the flux of experience.
(22). (N).

N. Dilman's comments are again relevant: " ... Quine seems to think that any posit must be a myth. But if it does the work for which it has been posited or postulated why should it be a myth? Presumably because it is 'only' a posit'. Only a posit as opposed to what?" (23) Later, he says: "Quine is wrong both about physical objects, as I have argued, and about Homer's gods. He is immeasurably crude in his few scattered remarks about the latter, in fact a complete philistine." (24).

We have now come a step further:

3. We decide on what we will say there is, on grounds of simplicity in relation to experience.

This brings us conveniently to a point at which we may turn to the parallel discussions of Carnap.

It may be useful to start with if we identify a case of doubtful terminology. We have been speaking, with Quine, about ontologies, an ontology, etc., as if we were clear about what this meant. Quine several times says such things as 'commitment to an ontology', 'commit ourselves to an ontology' (25), and we have followed his way of speaking while expounding his case. But to Carnap the use of this word is misleading. It seems indeed that he decides to misunderstand it, thus demonstrating its imprecision:

With respect to the basic attitude to take in choosing a language form (an "ontology" in Quine's terminology, which seems to me misleading), ... (26).

Now if one thing is clear from Quine's statements it is that by 'ontology' he did not mean 'a language form'. To him indeed the choice of a language form sometimes did not commit the speaker to an ontology. He speaks, for instance, of "the degree to which in our philosophical and unphilosophical discourse we involve ourselves in ontological commitments." (27).

When Carnap appears to think that Quine means by 'ontology' something like 'a language form in which assertions of existence occur' he is surely being unnecessarily misled. It is clear from Quine's words that there is on the one hand a form of discourse and on the other an implication of existence, the first of which can entail an assertion of the second. But to Carnap, as we shall see, such a connection is quite unacceptable.

Carnap calls a system of speaking about things a framework; and he starts by making a crucial distinction between questions which are internal to the framework, and questions about the framework itself, which are external to it. (28). To talk about things is to use a thing-language and thus to adopt the framework of things. But to ask about the reality of the thing-world itself (these terms are Carnap's, and may prove useful to us) is to ask a question external to this framework. He implies that there is no framework for asking external questions in, and therefore that any such questions are "framed in a wrong way". Such questions, he says later, are "devoid of cognitive content". (29). We are reminded of Wittgenstein in the Tractatus, distinguishing between what is in the world and what is beyond the world, (and indeed the derivation of these thoughts may well be traceable to that source via the Vienna Circle).

But we are also reminded that Russell, with the theory of types, produced a perfectly good system for asking questions about totalities, when he distinguished between first-order and second-order propositions. Provided one does not confuse the two, one can meaningfully ask second-order questions about collections of first-order propositions. Why not, we may wonder, a second-order framework within which questions could be asked about first-order frameworks?

Carnap, however, does not dwell on this point; he is concerned with something else. He wishes to make the point that to accept the reality of something "means nothing more than to accept a certain form of language". (30)

What he wants to know now is why or how one chooses to accept that language. This acceptance, he says, is not a theoretical question, but a practical one. The decision itself is "not of a cognitive nature", i.e. it is not a question of knowledge or information (31), though it may be influenced by knowledge:

The purposes for which the language is intended to be used, for instance, the purpose of communicating factual knowledge, will determine which factors are relevant for the decision. The efficiency, fruitfulness, and simplicity of the use of the thing language may be among the decisive factors. (32).

With the use of the word 'simplicity' here we are reminded of Quine. Carnap, however, will rather stress the factor of usefulness. Like Quine at one point, noted above, he recognises the relevance of experience:

The thing language in the customary form works indeed with a high degree of efficiency for most purposes of everyday life. This is a matter of fact, based upon the content of our experiences. However, it would be wrong to describe this situation by saying: "The fact of the efficiency of the thing language is confirming evidence for the reality of the thing world"; we should rather say instead: "This fact makes it advisable to accept the thing language". (33).

Let us again summarise in simplified form:

1. Talking about things amounts to adopting the thing-world framework.
2. We adopt the thing-world framework because it accords conveniently with experience.

Like Quine he will not take the next step, whichever way it might be, and say either that the world of things is brought into existence by our choice of framework and has no other existence; or that the thing-language works well because the non-linguistic world does really contain things.

Our experiences do not, in his analysis, tell us about those things; they simply tell us about the efficiency of the thing-language. The refusal to take any third step is based on his earlier decision not to allow cognitive content to questions external to the framework.

However, the efficiency of the thing-language does. Carnap agrees, give it some sort of prerogative. This, he says, is a practical matter; and he will not allow us to draw any theoretical conclusion from it. Yet surely, we wish to reply, it is practical in relation to a state of affairs external to the framework, with which the framework has to co-operate? Asserting its efficiency, usefulness, practicality etc., is itself making an external claim? It is not merely saying that a language must be internally consistent, but is it not rather saying that it must fit, itself, into a framework larger than itself? When both Quine and Carnap allude to the part played by experience they admit the relevance of matters external to the system itself.

Carnap, using the example of the choice of geometrical frameworks, considers co-ordinate systems: "... the decision to use three rather than two or four spatial coordinates is strongly suggested, but still not forced upon us, by the result of common observations." (34).

Now if observation can be mentioned at all, we may feel, so can the existence of the world of objects of observation, which, according to this statement, appears to be external to the framework in question. But no, apparently not. Empirical questions are permissible, because this is an empirical framework. But ontological questions are not:

Internal questions are here, in general, empirical questions to be answered by empirical investigations. On the other hand, the external questions of the reality of physical space and physical time are pseudo-questions. (35).

If we ask, he continues, whether there are really such things as space-time points, we may be asking an internal question, to which the answer is a matter of definition, and therefore "analytic and trivial". (36). Or we may be asking whether we should introduce a particular term into our language, which is a practical question, "a matter of decision rather than assertion", and only misleadingly presented as anything else. Or we might be asking whether our experiences are such as to make it "expedient and fruitful" to use these particular linguistic forms, which is, he says, a matter of degree and so not open to a clear-cut answer. (37). Nowhere, in fact, do we approach an assertion or denial of reality external to the system.

Carnap summarises his own case as follows.

Adopting a framework - "the introduction of new ways of speaking" - does not imply any assertion of reality. (38). (We may note that this is in contrast to Quine's point about commitment to an ontology; Carnap is insistent that accepting the framework implies no "assumption, belief, or assertion" of the reality of anything.)

To be sure, we have to face at this point an important question; but it is a practical, not a theoretical question; it is the question of whether or not to accept the new linguistic forms. The acceptance cannot be judged as being either true or false because it is not an assertion. It can only be judged as being more or less expedient, fruitful, conducive to the aim for which the language is intended. (39).

The same considerations, he says, apply to the use of abstract linguistic forms, involved for instance in talk of universals and numbers. This question of whether some form of language is "expedient and fruitful" (40) (N) is "not a question simply of yes or no, but a matter of degree."

N: Overleaf

N: Compare Ayer (41) on the subject of universals: "The question of universals is unrewarding as a subject for ontology since nothing turns on it. Once we have set out the motives for saying that there are universals and the motives for saying that there are not, the decision is unimportant. Whichever view is taken, nothing follows with regard to the truth or falsehood of any statement in which the predicates which are supposed to stand for universals are used." And further: "The trouble with these questions is that there are no agreed criteria by reference to which they can be settled. If the purist wishes to deny himself the use of certain symbols, then let him do so: it will be interesting to see how well he manages without them. Those who decide to retain them will consider it a sufficient justification that they perform the function that they do. There is no way of justifying their retention other than describing the use to which they are put."

This, we will see, is closely in accordance with the inclinations of Quine in his later paper, though the emphasis is different. Crucially Quine is inclined to say that it is a matter of degree as to what exists, rather than what language form we choose. Let us now turn to Quine's paper, 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism.'

The two dogmas to which Quine refers are (1) that statements are true either from their meanings, which statements are known as analytic, or due to their relation to fact, which are known as synthetic; and that there is "some fundamental cleavage" between the two; and (2) that meaningful statements are reducible to a form related to immediate experience. He is evasive about the exact expression of this last idea, so that one needs to use his own words: "the belief that each meaningful statement is equivalent to some logical construct upon terms which refer to immediate experience." (42). Both these dogmas he considers mistaken, and his aim is to refute them.

In his dealing with the first dogma we shall see Quine departing radically from Carnap's standpoint. and in both we find him tackling, as Carnap did not (N) the crucial area of the relation of language to experience. His avowed aim is the achievement of a consistent pragmatism. That is, he recognises the wisdom of Carnap's identification of usefulness and expediency as the criterion by which language forms are chosen, but feels that this approach may be more fruitfully exploited.

N: See, however, Carnap's paper 'The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language' (43) where he approaches a consideration of what verification actually consists of. "Since the meaning of a word is determined by its criterion of application (in other words: by the relations of deducibility entered into by its elementary sentence-form, by its truth conditions, by the method of its verification), the stipulation of the criterion takes away one's freedom to decide what one wishes to 'mean' by the word." The primary sentences, he says, are supposed to refer to 'the given'; "but there is no unanimity on the question what it is that is given." (44). This is perhaps as close as Carnap comes to a consideration of the relation of language to experience. Although he talks about "empirical criteria" and the method of verification, it is clear that language remains a matter of syntax and deducibility which he sees as a free-standing system.

The idea of analyticity rests, Quine observes, on synonymy. He investigates at length what characteristics define a synonym, and comes to the conclusion that a circular argument results. (45). Briefly, synonymy can only be defined in terms of interchangeability without loss of truth; but the preservation of truth values can only be understood. Quine argues, if one already possesses the idea of an analytic statement. Whether his argument on this matter is convincing or not need not concern us here, since the interesting point is the effect of rejecting Carnap's division between the analytic and the synthetic.

"It is obvious that truth in general depends on both language and extralinguistic fact." This statement comes towards the end of a long explicit disagreement with Carnap. (46). If statements were, however, dissectable into linguistic and factual parts, there would be some in which the factual parts would have a zero value, and these would be analytic statements. But according to Quine no such distinction has yet satisfactorily been made, and therefore "That there is such a distinction to be drawn at all is an unempirical dogma of empiricists, a metaphysical article of faith." (47) (N).

N: Overleaf

N: In drawing this paper to a close. Quine summarises his agreement and disagreement with Carnap. Unlike Carnap, he will not admit a distinction between ontological questions (presumably Carnap's 'external' ones) and the ('internal') questions of natural science. Quine gives the example of the question whether to count classes as entities. "Now Carnap has maintained that this is a question not of matters of fact but of choosing a convenient language form, a convenient conceptual scheme or framework for science. With this I agree, but only on the proviso that the same be conceded regarding scientific hypotheses generally. Carnap has recognized that he is able to preserve a double standard for ontological questions and scientific hypotheses only by assuming an absolute distinction between the analytic and the synthetic; and I need not say again that this is a distinction which I reject."

Turning to the reference which Quine gives at this point, we may read Carnap's side of the story:

Quine does not acknowledge the distinction which I emphasize above, because according to his general conception there are no sharp boundary lines between logical and factual truth, between questions of meaning and questions of fact, between the acceptance of a language structure and the acceptance of an assertion formulated in the language. (48)

N: cont...

Quine responds:

I have been urging that this difference is only one of degree, and that it turns upon our vaguely pragmatic inclination to adjust one strand of the fabric of science rather than another in accommodating some particular recalcitrant experience. Conservatism figures in such choices, and so does the quest for simplicity.

Carnap, Lewis, and others take a pragmatic stand on the question of choosing between language forms, scientific frameworks; but their pragmatism leaves off at the imagined boundary between the analytic and the synthetic. In repudiating such a boundary I espouse a more thorough pragmatism. Each man is given a scientific heritage plus a continuing barrage of sensory stimulation; and the considerations which guide him in warping his scientific heritage to fit his continuing sensory promptings are, where rational, pragmatic. (49).

Historically both Quine and Carnap were writing these articles at a time when the rejection of metaphysics and commitment to empiricism were part of philosophical orthodoxy. It would have seemed very eccentric for either of them to have claimed not to be an empiricist. (N). Yet the second dogma which Quine now attacks is the basis of the verification theory of meaning (51), and he observes that while this dogma, "the translatability of statements about the physical world into statements about immediate experience" (52), occupied a good deal of Carnap's attention in his earlier works, "in his later writing he abandoned all notion" of it; "Reductionism in its radical form has long since ceased to figure in Carnap's philosophy." (53).

Now Quine sees the two dogmas as being closely related. "My present suggestion is that it is nonsense, and the root of much nonsense, to speak of a linguistic component and a factual component in the truth of any individual statements." (54). How then is truth related to fact? As an empiricist, he is obliged to explain. "The dogma of reductionism survives in the supposition that each statement, taken in isolation from its fellows, can admit of confirmation or infirmation at all.

N:Dilman comments (50): "For all his rejection of 'dogmas', he is tied to the apron-strings of Logical Positivism.

My countersuggestion, issuing essentially from Carnap's doctrine of the physical world in the Aufbau, is that our statements about the external world face the tribunal of sense experience not individually but only as a corporate body." (55). It is as a totality that a linguistic system, such as that of science, "has a double dependence upon language and experience", a duality not identifiable in any of its statements individually.

This seems highly promising, but we must observe that it is in conflict with a point of Carnap's already noted. We cannot say anything about the system as a whole, least of all whether it corresponds to sense experience, since these are external matters and therefore, in terms of the framework, devoid of cognitive significance. We were, however, less than happy about this specification when it occurred, supposing that ways could be found of avoiding it. And if Quine is now proposing a formula which may prove useful and which contradicts it, perhaps we should not feel that Carnap's internal/external ruling need much delay us.

Individual statements do not break down into linguistic and non-linguistic elements, and so cannot be either analytic or synthetic; the whole body of statements, however, has a dual dependence, on language and on experience. As a "corporate body" our statements about the external world have to "face the tribunal of sense experience".

That is, presumable, to the extent to which the whole body partly depends on experience. The whole body has a synthetic element. It follows, but is at present less interesting, that the whole body has an analytic element, which has to face a different tribunal, that of meaning. Thus we may happily continue to be empiricists, while still exercising our preference for semantics.

Quine's conclusions from these stimulating considerations are of special relevance to the present work, and so will now be considered in detail. It will be useful then to set this later paper in the context of the points made earlier by both Quine and Carnap, to see to what extent we have progressed and whether the doubts to which some of the earlier discussions gave rise have been aggravated or quelled.

Quine applies his conclusions about empiricism to the body of our knowledge or beliefs, that which, in his earlier terms, we would assert that there is, "from the most casual matters of geography and history to the profoundest laws of atomic physics or even of pure mathematics and logic". (56). This body of belief, he says, "is a man-made fabric which impinges on experience only along its edges." He is, however, prepared to adapt it to conform to experience.

"A conflict with experience at the periphery occasions readjustments in the interior of the field." (57). It follows, though he does not explicitly say so, that experience is itself a system independent of language, or of whatever form the knowledge, laws etc. may be supposed to take. Experience is not a man-made fabric, but (therefore) given from outside any man-made system. This latent point does not quite accord with what he has to say next.

The fact is that if we know what we know partly through the effect of experience, we may be supposed to know of something, not just to know something. What has Quine to say on this delicate subject? Every statement, Quine says, can be treated in the way we treat analytic statements, "can be held true come what may," even one which seems to be close to the boundary with experience. Equally every statement, even those which seem to state immutable laws, is always open to revision in the light of experience. Yet it appears that in this particular democracy some statements are more equal than others: when a statement seems particularly "germane to sense experience", what this means, Quine explains, is that there is a "relative likelihood, in practice, of our choosing one statement rather than another for revision in the event of recalcitrant experience." But why? Whence this relative likelihood? What has one statement got that another lacks?

There is, he continues, a "natural tendency to disturb the total system as little as possible". Some statements are felt "to have a sharper empirical reference" than others. (58). Those, it is implied, cause more trouble if you adjust them.

So once again the trouble-makers get preferential treatment? Is this fair? Why should the harmless "highly theoretical statements of physics or logic or ontology" be liable to continual adjustment. when statements such as that which says "there are brick houses on Elm Street" can be assured of immunity? Why is this? There must be a reason? Is it not, we wish to ask, precisely because there are brick houses on Elm Street?

Quine cannot admit this, since "any statement can be held true come whay may, if we make drastic enough adjustments elsewhere in the system" (59), which is a necessary condition if one is to do away with the Carnapian distinction between the analytic and the synthetic: and it can therefore be maintained, with a certain amount of effort, that there are no brick houses on Elm Street. It is a matter of convenience, and convenience is a matter of degree. To cite again the crucial passage quoted above: (60)

Physical objects are conceptually imported into the situation as convenient intermediaries - not by definition in terms of experience, but simply as irreducible posits comparable, epistemologically, to the gods of Homer. For my part I do, *qua* lay physicist, believe in physical objects and not in Homer's gods; and I consider it a scientific error to believe otherwise. But in point of epistemological footing the physical objects and the gods differ only in degree and not in kind. Both sorts of entities enter our conception only as cultural posits. The myth of physical objects is epistemologically superior to most in that it has proved more efficacious than other myths as a device for working a manageable structure into the flux of experience. (21).

But what this amounts to is that physical objects are not entirely of the epistemological status of myths, for the good reason that we do not find ourselves obliged to accommodate our language to concur with the experience of mythic items. The choice of posit, Quine clearly says, is only better or worse in relation to the "differences in the degree to which they expedite our dealings with sense experiences". This makes centaurs as a posit considerably less worthy than brick houses on Elm Street.

This is not just to say that they are more liable to adjustment: they are simply not as good. We are never going to have our dealings with experience expedited by talking of centaurs. This is moreover not a matter of degree. but an absolute position. Perhaps Quine is exaggerating. when he says that "in point of epistemological footing the physical objects and the gods differ only in degree and not in kind."

The edge of the system must be kept squared with experience; the rest, with all its elaborate myths or fictions. has as its objective the simplicity of laws.

(61)

The edge of the system is squared with something outside the system. with something which, in these terms, would be another system, the system of experience. Shall we therefore highlight the existence of these two systems by calling them systems A and B?

Now system A, that of language and its associated knowledge and beliefs, has its internal organisation, in which such things as influence from the periphery, distance from the edge, and so on, are matters of degree.

Now this applies to all factors internal to system A. We may usefully borrow Carnap's terms here, and distinguish between internal and external questions. The position of a point within the organisation of system A is a matter which is relational in terms of the framework of system A.

But the framework of system A itself cannot be such a relative matter: it cannot be relative to the framework of system A. If with Carnap we choose not to discuss it, holding such discourse devoid of significance, we can say no more. But if like Quine we do hold that system A makes contact with system B at its edges, then there is something more we can say.

The interface with system B is not a feature within the framework of system A. It is rather a property of system A as a whole. This is perhaps what Quine meant when he said that our beliefs can only be tested as a corporate body. But it does not fit with his dictum that all decisions as to the use of terms are a matter of degree. The final edge of system A is a form of absolute, a limiting case. There is nothing for the interface with system B to be a degree of: there is no scale of calibration available.

The only way we could continue the doctrine (which one might call 'Quine's dogma') is by seeing both system A and system B as components of a supersystem, system Θ , whereby the interfaces between them become internal to the organisation or framework of system Θ , and therefore relative to that, and so a matter of degree.

We have now broadly reviewed this material. It leaves one with a curious sense of ambivalence, as being at the same time tantalisingly promising and ultimately disappointing. The time has come to give expression to some doubts. When Carnap leads us to recognise the distinction between internal and external questions, he prompts us to remark that it is the latter which we wish to ask; he then dismisses them as devoid of cognitive significance. When Quine says that we must not think that what there is depends on words: it is what we say there is that depends on words, he leads us to ask what then is known of what there is? If external questions are not cognitively significant because they are practical rather than theoretical, is there not something very significant and informative about the fact of their practicality?

In any case, how can Quine possibly distinguish between what there is and what we say there is, since every time he makes a statement on the subject of what there is he is destroying the distinction. On the one hand, to say that there is such a distinction is to claim that there is a realm of what there is which is not spoken about. On the other hand to say that there is a realm of what we say there is entails holding that we do speak about what there is. If Quine says there is (a) 'what there is', and (b) 'what we say there is', how is he going to express this claim that there is (a)?

How is he going to say that he knows about it, that it is separate from (b), or anything at all, without contradiction? And if he cannot do any of these things, then what is the sense in trying to make the claim? Whereof he cannot speak, thereof he should have remained silent. But it is too late.

Our programme now must be to disentangle our dissatisfactions and state them in a way that would help us to find a means of revealing, if possible, the point at which a promising line of thought diverged from our expectations. What, then, is one's overall reaction to the arguments of these two philosophers? It is hard to avoid the response that the existence of some things makes itself apparent to us in strict independence of, and without the help of, any linguistic structure chosen by an act of decision. An apple falls on the head of Isaac Newton ... Right, Carnap replies, all you are about to say is that Newton, among others, has chosen to adopt the thing-language. It is convenient for him (and incidentally has far-reaching consequences) that he did; had he been more inclined to describe the event in terms of relativity or quantum physics, or indeed if he had opted instead for the language of Berkeleian idealism, we might never have had the law of gravitational attraction.

The event itself, however, had no meaningful non-framework form. Whatever it may be that has made itself known to Newton, it is not, in exclusion from his preference for the thing-language, an object, namely an apple, which strikes him on the head.

Very well, we bear in mind the alternatives, and defer to Carnap on cases which involve the thing-language. But there are non-thinglike entities which surely manifest themselves to us without our needing to choose a language system to enable them to do so. Take for instance the thunderstorm which broke while we crossed Time Square last night. Now there was a set of circumstances which we became aware of through direct sensation of several different forms, none of which were linguistic in the slightest. Nothing is plainer than that the thunderstorm was real, that it was part of actuality, and that in the process of getting wet we have made no linguistic decisions whatsoever.

There is, to the layman without an umbrella, nothing linguistic about this thunderstorm at all. It is presented to us without any action on our part as a fact of the real world.

Now Quine would say that while all this may be so it is not the point that he is making.

He is only saying that our grouping together various phenomena and reifying them under a single title, 'thunderstorm in Time Square', is a decision about the choice of linguistic forms, and anything we may appear to say about the reality of the phenomena in fact amounts only to saying something about the happening of that choice. Quine would probably not deny that in mentioning our attitude to the phenomena he is implying that there are such phenomena. He accepts that one of the things that makes one language system preferable to another is the degree of accord with experience. But he does not admit that anything is being said about the phenomena experienced, not even that they exist, when we talk about such an event being real or actual.

Now on the one hand one can see the usefulness of this. 'That is the sort of thing that I, in my chosen language system, call real or actual.' This distinguishes, for instance, thunderstorms from events which may be equally intensely experienced but are nevertheless recognised as hallucinatory.

Yet what is unsatisfactory is the apparent refusal to follow the causal chain to its natural conclusion. The choice of language is partly conditioned by experience; the experience, it is not denied, is non-linguistic; therefore, surely, the causes of the experience must be real in a perfectly non-linguistic way?

That Quine will not say this even when he is led to the brink of doing so must make us wonder what it is about it that he dislikes. To understand this I think we have to remember the paper 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism', of which the conclusion 'Empiricism Without the Dogmas' points clearly to the position which Quine wished to adopt.

A programme which attempts to rid empiricism of its dependence on experience may seem doomed to failure. But Quine does not deny that experience plays a part in the process of decision-making which he sees going on. Had he not been willing to accept this he would have had to embrace the standpoint that words alone determine (or perhaps constitute?) the makeup of the world. And this, we have seen, he is not willing to do. He is, as he says, aiming for a wider and purer pragmatism than Carnap's.

If the rejection of experience as the ultimate validation of statements did in fact lead to the loss of empiricism, then surely Quine would have the duty either to accept that loss or to avoid that rejection? The fact is that he cannot reject experience entirely; he wants to remain an empiricist; he wants to accept that there is a 'what there is' which does not depend on words; but he sees that what there is when construed through the medium of what he says there is has a flexibility the infinitude of which is only constrained by pragmatic considerations.

To summarise the doubts. then. First. the difficulties inherent in distinguishing what there is from what we say there is make this a most unpromising course to follow. And if they cannot (and I think they cannot) be distinguished, then possibly they are the same thing, or at least so causally linked as to be part of the same event. This could work in either of two ways:

(1) What there is is whatever we say there is. in that it gets its being from that saying:

or

(2) We say what we say there is because of what there is.

This is not as confusing as it sounds. Let 'what there is' = x. 'what we say there is' = q:

(1) q governs x

(2) x governs q

You cannot have it both ways. But Quine, with remarkable self-denial, wants to have it neither. He can only do that if he can find a way of disentangling the two items; but it seems to me that their nature is such that neither can live without the other. The reader may try the experiment for himself. First, say that there is something without saying that there is something. Second, say that something is without saying that something is.

A second set of related doubts may be summarised as follows. If we adopt a language form because of its simplicity in relation to experience, this implies that experience is something outside that language form. At this point I think it would be interesting to ask some simple layman's questions.

1. Are our experiences real?
2. Are they experiences of real objects?

If the answer to 1 is no, then why are they relevant to a choice of language system?

If the answer to 1 is yes and the answer to 2 (for whatever reason) no, then what are our experiences experiences of? What, in fact, are they?

But if the answer to both questions is yes, then why do the semantic philosophers not allow us to say so?

Has the process of discussion of semantics and ontology somehow gone wrong? Should we conclude after all that semantics cannot throw any light on ontology, because it deals with a different subject, using different tools and attending to different matter? But surely the structure of the world and the structure of language must be mutually relevant to one another? Nobody is claiming that the choice of language system is an arbitrary or random matter.

In fact it is said to be pragmatic, decided in terms of usefulness, expediency, efficiency or simplicity. And if the choice is a pragmatic matter, then whatever it is that makes one system more convenient than another is discovered empirically. Otherwise what does 'convenient' mean? It must mean that it has a certain type of accord or relation to experience.

So deciding on a system is in effect making some sort of assertion about what the world is like, because if it was of a structure which did not accord with this language system one would have chosen another. The decision says, as a minimum, that the makeup of the world is of a sort that makes this language system convenient. We saw Quine inclined to deny this, but he cannot do so consistently. Perhaps one could go on from there. For our purposes we only need to note that something is asserted by semantics about ontology. (62).

References

- 1 Review of Metaphysics, 2. Reprinted in QUINE, 'From a Logical Point of View', Harvard, 1953; and in LINSKY (ed.) 'Semantics and the Philosophy of Language', Chicago, 1952. References in this Chapter are to the paperback edition of the latter, 1972.
- 2 Revue internationale de Philosophie, 11. Reprinted in LINSKY, op.cit.
- 3 Philosophical Review. Reprinted in QUINE, op.cit. References to the Harvard edition, 1953.
- 4 LINSKY, op.cit., p. 189.
- 5 Ibid. p. 191.
- 6 Ibid. p. 194.
- 7 Ibid. p. 200.
- 8 Loc.cit.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Op.cit. p. 202.
- 11 Ibid. pp. 202-3.
- 12 Ibid. p. 189.
- 13 QUINE, 'From a Logical Point of View', p. 103.
- 14 Ibid., pp. 203-4.
- 15 DILMAN, Ilham. 'Quine of Ontology, Necessity and Experience, a Philosophical Critique'. Albany, SUNY Press, 1984.
- 16 Ibid. p. 12.
- 17 Ibid. p. 10.
- 18 LINSKY, op.cit., p. 204.

- 19 Loc.cit.
- 20 LINSKY, op.cit., p. 205.
- 21 AYER, A. J., in GEACH, AYER, QUINE: 'Symposium: On What There Is'. Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume 25, 1951. p. 143.
- 22 QUINE, op.cit. p. 44.
- 23 DILMAN, op.cit. p. 44.
- 24 Ibid. p. 30.
- 25 e.g. LINSKY, op.cit. p. 196.
- 26 CARNAP in LINSKY, op.cit. p. 220n.
- 27 QUINE in LINSKY, op.cit. p. 200.
- 28 CARNAP in LINSKY, op.cit. pp. 209, 210.
- 29 Op.cit. p. 216.
- 30 Op.cit. p. 211.
- 31 Loc.cit.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Op.cit. p. 212. My emphasis.
- 34 Op.cit. p. 217.
- 35 Loc.cit.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Op.cit. p. 218.
- 38 Op.cit. p. 219.
- 39 Loc.cit.
- 40 Op.cit. p. 227.
- 41 AYER, in GEACH, op.cit. p.145 See also p. 146.
- 42 QUINE, op.cit. p. 20.

- 43 CARNAP (originally in German) trans. Arthur PAP, in
'Logical Positivism', ed. A. J. Ayer, Allen & Unwin
1959. pp. 61-81.
- 44 Loc.cit.
- 45 QUINE, op.cit. pp. 29-31.
- 46 Ibid. p. 36.
- 47 Ibid. pp. 36-7.
- 48 CARNAP in LINSKY, op.cit. p. 220n.
- 49 QUINE, op.cit. p. 46.
- 50 DILMAN, op.cit. p. 39.
- 51 QUINE, op.cit. p. 39.
- 52 Ibid. p. 40.
- 53 Loc.cit.
- 54 QUINE, op.cit. p. 42.
- 55 Ibid. p. 41.
- 56 Ibid. p. 42.
- 57 Loc.cit.
- 58 QUINE, op.cit. p. 44.
- 59 Ibid. p. 43.
- 60 Above, pp. 83.
- 61 QUINE, op.cit. p. 45.
- 62 See also HARMAN, Gilbert: 'Quine on Meaning and
Existence', Review of Metaphysics, 21. 1: pp. 124-151.
September 1967. 2: pp. 343-367. December 1967.
and SUDARAJA, P. 'Language and Ontological
Commitments', Darshana International, 6. pp. 11-31.
October 1966.

II FROM UNIVERSALS TO CHAIRS AND TABLES

Introduction

To sum up, before we start the review which constitutes this Section, the progress we have so far made: Existence is at least partly a practical matter; the use of the word 'exists' in assertions or denials cannot be reduced to a purely theoretical exercise. This has been the conclusion reached from investigation of several different approaches to the question of existence, ranging from the Platonic formula to the work of the semanticists. With this conclusion behind us we now approach an important move.

In this second Section we will see that an agreement-based decision is the necessary reverse of the empirical coin. It will emerge that while claims about the existence of something can have no meaning without a reference to experience, they are at the same time implicitly statements about what is agreed.

The primary significance of this second point will emerge from the discussion. This position might be summarised as follows. It is no test of whether or not something exists to refer to experience. That is not how the matter is ultimately decided. It is however a test - and the one we normally use, albeit without noticing - to refer to agreement.

It is in order to make this clear that this Section will now consider a range of cases of entities to which statements about existence may be applied, from those which common-sense would consider to exist only in a very weak sense, such as numbers and universals; through more debatable classes such as terms supposedly standing for medical or scientific entities; by way of things which we know for one reason or another do not exist, yet may still be spoken of in similar terms; through the marginal class of things which may possibly exist (such as the Loch Ness Monster and the abominable snowman) but about which one cannot, for one reason or another, be sure; ending by considering such features of the world as those which nobody outside philosophy would doubt existed.

Inserted into this graded procedure is a discussion of a special case, the closed system, which will throw some light onto the methodology of disputes.

In all this we shall be trying to discover what is actually meant in each case where an existence claim is made or rejected, and trying to identify what procedures disputes on such claims lead the disputants to adopt. We will be interested to discover whether the means of settling disputes varies between the cases.

II. 1.

Concerning Universals

Aristotle said that Socrates did not believe that universals existed independently of the particular objects.

"It was the others who made them separate, and called these separate entities the Forms of everything that exists".

(1). But however little we know about the mind of Socrates, there is no doubt about what Plato believed, or at least claimed to believe and consistently argued for. True knowledge can be approached only by thought, not through the senses. (2). This is because the qualities apparent in particular objects of sense all fall short of their absolute form. (3). Yet there must be such an absolute, and that being so the objects of sense gain their qualities by resemblance to the respective absolutes. (4).

If that exposition of the Theory of Forms has the merit only of brevity, it is because we are not really concerned here with discussing it. What we are concerned with is the following problem: when Plato asserted that there were such things as 'absolute beauty and magnitude and all the rest' (5) what did he mean?

Now clearly he did not mean that if we happened to go somewhere we would encounter Beauty. Anything perceived by the senses can be perceived in different ways, and so falls short of being absolute; and thus it would be self-contradictory to hold that what is absolute could be perceived by the senses.

Since his universalia are definitely ante rem. since he even concluded that we have knowledge of them before our birth. being born knowing them (6), he cannot mean that we can extract, from instances of justice, the idea or concept of pure and unadulterated Justice.

Plato implies in fact that there could be Justice without there being justice. And certainly that if there were no Justice there could be no justice. The absolute is free-standing, independent of the instances. Yet what sort of thing can it be?

Plato does, however, give us the impression that by the Form of something he intends much the same sort of thing, in perfect form, as the object with which we are familiar, with the crucial difference that it can be perceived only by the mind. Towards the end of The Republic he says that the maker of a bed or a table has his eye on the relevant Form. (7). But the Form of Bed, he goes on to say, was made, if it was made by anybody, by God. (8). God made the unique and pre-existent Bed, the essential and real Bed. Now this is crucial, in that it implies that the Form of Bed is the sort of thing that exists somewhere, since it may be thought of as having been made, and since Plato says that for one reason or another there is only one of it. (9)

Indeed Plato may be guilty of some internal inconsistency on this matter. since he has said that 'the beautiful, and the good' are never seen 'with your eyes' or any other sense, but through thought, (10), yet when he speaks of eternal and absolute Beauty in the Symposium (11) he talks of seeing, catching sight of, appearing to and coming to sight of, exactly as if the person having the experience were using his eyes.

Certainly there is much that is mystical in Plato. and we do not always know on what level to take what he says: he also makes full and frequent use of metaphor. so that the literal sense of any statement may be open to doubt. Let us therefore offer alternative views, as being the main possibilities of what he might have meant.

Plato might mean that there is an actual thing, Beauty, which one can (by means which we do not need to understand, though by thought rather than through the senses) come to see, just as one sees Socrates sitting across the table. If he meant that, we would be entitled to ask him such questions as 'how do you know?' and 'where is it?' and so on.

Alternatively he might mean that by advanced intellectual training one could come to perceive the idea of pure and absolute Beauty, the refinement of the concept in the mind, in such a way that talk of 'seeing' it etc. is necessary to express the clarity of the perception.

Under such circumstances it would not be relevant to ask about location, and we would have to be content with wondering whether his expression of an experience which we may suppose him to have had is not slightly misleading.

The relevance of this paraphrase of Plato to our present exercise is as follows. We do not have to decide on the sense of an existential claim, providing we are able to identify the broad classes of alternative. When we have done that, however, we are presented with a choice of different procedures, if we wish to go further and contest or support the claim. And that concerns us, because as a purely practical matter it indicates the direction in which the meaning of existence claims may lie.

We have had occasion to say of Plato's theories before that if they cannot be applied in the course of deciding actual questions they are of diminished interest. (12). Let us take, then, an example of a possible real dispute, and consider how a disagreement on the matter of the existence of universals might actually arise. Citizen A, also known as the man in the street, has the habit of proclaiming 'There's no justice in the world'. Elsewhere, on a different platform, an aspiring politician, B, is making the claim 'I stand for liberty and justice'. Now clearly if they met they would be confronted with an incompatibility, and if pressed on the matter would need to agree on a means of resolving it.

What A means is that he has encountered numerous examples of unjust circumstances and no evidence of the contrary. Does he mean that this has led him to conclude that Plato was wrong, in that there is not after all an absolute item, Justice, which enables just things to take place? But both he and Plato have knowledge of at least the idea of justice. otherwise he could not deny its occurrence in the world. So does he perhaps mean that although he concedes the possibility of Plato's Justice, he does not expect ever to encounter manifestations of it in this vale of tears? The question matters to B, because without at least the possibility of justice he cannot maintain his position. It would therefore be wise of him to refute A's claim, which he will presumably do by pointing to instances of bona fide justice. In doing so he would illustrate the fact that they share the common notion. We shall see what may result from that.

It might, of course, have been otherwise. They might have found that they disagreed about the meaning of the word. This would quickly have brought them, and us, to a deadlock, and since there is a strong vested interest for all parties in avoiding that, we may freely suppose that either from the start or after brief discussion they become clear in their agreement.

B: How can you say there's no justice, when we propose to give Old Age Pensioners half-fare flights to the moon?

A: I'll believe that when it happens.

The worst that can happen by way of inconclusion is for A to remain an agnostic on the matter. If B can point to any event within the experience of A which A would agree to be an instance of justice, then A will admit that justice exists. And conversely if A can persuade B that none of the Just Party's attempts to implement justice in the real hard world will ever succeed, then B will be obliged to become a sceptic.

Once the question of definition is no longer a contention, in fact, existence is a matter of things such as may be experienced. But this is by no means the end of the matter. The fact that A and B can embark on the dispute in the first place and proceed to attempt to identify examples, means that they are able to hold up, as it were, an independent blue-print of justice, and see if anything conforms to it; even the prior step of agreeing the definition implies that they already both think that they know what they mean by justice, and in A's case moreover while denying that any examples of it exist. And this gives some weight to Plato's contention that the Form of it pre-exists experience.

We shall consider shortly what that might mean. in normal life: but if in the meantime we find this a slightly uncomfortable result. it could well be because we are drawing the wrong sort of analogy. The existence of African things. for instance. indicates the existence of a large item called Africa. But on the other hand the existence of Roman Catholic things does not in any way impel us to seek an object, Roman Catholicism, for which they are evidence, and if it did we would be disappointed. While similarly we do not deny that there are many manifestations of a 19th-century Gothic Revival. we do not hope in due course to find that revival itself. and purchase it for the British Museum. Why then be sorry about the apparent insubstantiality of Justice, when a healthier attitude would be to give thanks for the very hard reality of the evidence which makes it real.

These considerations will now lead us to leave Plato and to think about the role of universals in our normal world. by means of asking how we would decide on their existence or non-existence, and (to put the same matter a slightly different way) what the consequences are if they do or do not exist. We will then move on to discuss the related area of numbers. Before proceeding, however, let us note that there is nothing so far which cuts off the matter of the existence of universals from the question of the existence of anything else we have so far considered.

A semantic question such as might be dealt with by the use of a dictionary leads, when agreed on, to strictly practical and experiential matters. That is as it should be. Matters of reality are matters of our world. There is no mystical abstraction here.

When we remark the incidence of a black cat and of a black dog we are recognising the transferability of the term 'black'. When we identify Mrs. Jones' cat and Mrs. Williams' cat, we are making a similar claim about the term 'cat'. The question is, if this does not imply that there is, or exists, a thing called blackness, and a thing called catness, then what does it imply. Yet if that were the case, we should then want to know by what means Mrs. Jones' cat participated in the item catness and the item blackness.

To instantiate something is to represent it by an instance. Thus if you do not know what paranomasia is, I could give you the example of 'non Angli sed angeli', and doubtless given also some background knowledge of the sort of thing being dealt with you would then recognise paranomasia whenever you came across it again. Paranomasia is instantiated by 'non Angli sed angeli'. But we know quite well that what is happening is that the identity of the rhetorical form itself results from the similarity of such instances.

Because there would be no paranomasia without that similarity. there would be no paranomasia without those instances. It is not as if Pope Gregory actually took anything from a common pool of paranomasia (risking, for instance, its depletion) when formulating his little joke.

To say that catness is instantiated in Mrs Jones' cat is only to say that a number of creatures have particular characteristics. If one or more of these characteristics is definitive, to the extent that it distinguishes that group of creatures from all others, then those (as we shall see in the next sub-section) are necessary characteristics: but only those. The others may be, in greater or larger numbers, sufficient; some cats may lack some of them, and still be cats, while no dogs could possess them without being counted as cats.

There is a theory that what has happened in the case of a black cat is that catness and blackness (or, if one wishes to make a fine point, cat and black) are co-instantiated. That is, that an example of what is meant by black and an example of what is meant by cat reside, by chance, in the same item. Evidently it might have been otherwise. Cat and black are not co-instantiated in Mrs. Williams' cat, nor in Mrs. Evans' dog.

The implication is that there is an act of putting things together. and that this takes the form of drawing from an independent source. itself amenable to several uses. The olive oil bottle stands on the kitchen shelf. It may be used to make a salad dressing or alternatively a mayonnaise. For the salad dressing we reach also for the vinegar bottle. And we would reach for that as well if we wished to make (on the other hand) a mint sauce. And so on.

However. this is so hopelessly misleading that it casts doubt on the usefulness of the term co-instantiation. When we form the idea of a black cat we do not take from the conceptual shelf the jar marked 'cat' and measure out a little, then reach for the jar marked 'black'. Indeed if we did we should for a moment be faced with the necessity of a colourless cat. An uncomfortable regression sets in if we contemplate that idea, since in order to do even that we would need to have reached for a jar marked 'colourless', or alternatively 'formless'. And what would the world be like during that moment when we have reached for one of those? Philosophers have enough problems without being visited by the spectre of a non-yet-colourless cat. In fact, however, the matter only arose because we have in front of us, requiring a description, Mrs. Jones' household pet. (13).

What actually takes place does not however entirely avoid the kitchen-shelf view. We know that the general term 'black' arose because a number of otherwise disparate pieces of the world have the same spectral range. (N) There is no immediate implication there that that spectral range has independent existence, in heaven or in the mind of God or whatever. It is a function simply of the refractive quality of the substance, which is a relation between light and matter, an activity or event taking place at certain moments of time. However, from the fact that a number of such events do fall within that range we derive the general term for them, 'black'. It is that which then takes on independent existence, to the extent that a black cat may be an instance of it. You cannot have an instance of something which is only that instance.

N: A literal acceptance of this point would overlook the fact that universals, however they may come about, may play a limiting and standard-setting role themselves. It is not suggested that the same effect might be achieved by something we might call 'a certain spectral range'. This would be to invite the responses 'What spectral range? Are its limits the limits of what is black? Or might something fall within that range and not appear black?' and so on. (13a)

cont ...

N: continued

This consideration brings out the point that any approach to universals would have to take account of marginal cases - 'It's not really black, it just looks it', 'It looks black enough to me'. The usefulness of emphasising this point, for the purpose of the present work, is that it underlines the requirement of a reference to agreement, which plays the role of a deciding factor. Again, however, it should not be thought that consensus could be some form of law; if that were the case then we would not have taken account of possible cases of unresolvable dispute, and would thus fail to accord with observable reality. Where consensus occurs we can confidently say that such-and-such is black. Where it is absent we can say that we are not quite sure.

It should not be thought that by means of replacing a heavenly kitchen-shelf with a linguistic one we have in any way diminished the problem. If we are obliged to say that something exists, but that it only exists linguistically, the issue has simply become more baffling and obscure. It has not gone away. Certainly the terms which we use are culturally conditioned, and therefore not absolute in a universal way. We know that the Eskimos have a number of different words for white, whereas one is enough for us. They need them.

It would therefore be acceptable to say that for the Eskimos white (1), white (2) and so on are real items of experience, real parts of the make-up of their world, and so on, in just the way that our single white is of ours. The question of existence thus survives recognition of the relative nature of terminology.

When we use universals in ordinary life, if indeed the simple act of recognising common characteristics may be so termed, we do embark on both a semantic and an ontological track. That is, we bring into play a term the meaning of which relies on its context in a culturally-based language-system. We also refer to something outside that system, existing independently of its examples, such as the light-refracting quality of matter or the characterising elements of biological species. We do not, by doing so, make any claim as to what sort of thing that is, merely recognising

by the reference that it belongs to the sphere of experience rather than of language.

Further pursuit of these independent referents would reveal them to have both semantic and ontological aspects; but we shall be dealing with that situation when we come to consider scientific and medical terms in Section II.2. For the moment the important point to note is that we do not discover universals by means of, for instance, blundering into them; we rather choose (by social conditioning) to include them in our language system.

But nor can we reduce them entirely to their role in that, since by their nature they refer to something real outside it.

Let us now take a similar approach to the related question of the status of numbers.

It is hard to imagine any circumstances other than the practice of philosophy in which one might ask 'Do numbers exist?' or 'Does the number four (or whatever) exist?'

Indeed the ordinary person, and even perhaps the ordinary philosopher, might not take this question very seriously, if it were not for the fact that it has been held by some (N) that numbers are the only things that exist, or that numbers are more real than anything else, and on a less extreme level that numbers are certainly real.

Now 'real' might well be used here in the sense of something's being a real logical construct, which would mean that it plays a valid and effective part in some system. This is not the same as being a given feature of the world. One of the many differences between these two forms of what we would be willing to call reality is that the former is mutable in a way that the latter is not.

N: It was commonly believed that for Pythagoras and his followers, number was the essence of all things. See for instance Aristotle, Metaphysics 1, 6, 987: 'They say that whatever is () exists by imitation () of numbers.'

That is, if one changes the reference system, rather as one might apply a different measuring grid to a map, then one gets a different result. Thus any number can be viewed as some other number, when for instance one could say that a certain multiplicity was not four units but two pairs, or sixteen half-units, and so on. If numbers had independent reality, we instinctively feel, this would not be so. There would be an irreducible phenomenon which could be expressed only by one symbol.

Let us see if such a thing can be found in the realm of numbers. The phases of the moon would seem to be a feature presented to us rather than constructed, yet they are not necessarily four in number. One could view the matter as a duality, for instance, made up of the waxing moon and the waning moon. On the other hand the whole cycle is a unity, since it proceeds from the moment of the full moon to the next time that occurs, or alternatively from the new to the new. A lunation is one complete event.

A solar year is also a complete event, from winter solstice to winter solstice. These two unities, in fact, a lunation and a solar cycle, would seem to have the sort of determinacy we have in mind. They have fixed boundaries and peculiarly defining characteristics, a recognisable effect and a degree of constancy. (15). It is in the nature of our galactic position that this should be so. Now let us ask one more question about this real world.

If the number twelve did not exist. what would be the relation between lunations and the solar cycle? If they are real, then the relation between them must be real. It will not do to paraphrase 'twelve' in some way. That would be the same as saying that twelve exists, but for some reason we have some taboo about uttering its name.

If the moon does perform so many full lunations during the period in which the sun completes one cycle, then we are presented by nature with an example of number, and even if we were to call it something else it would still be an example of something, which is something outside and beyond the individual, particular lunations and the one complete cycle of the sun.

It might moreover be asserted (quite independently) that Christ was accompanied by certain specified disciples, and no more than them, and no less. One can easily imagine a means of demonstrating, or indeed of discovering, a structural relationship between that fact and the annual lunations; and from there proceed to the conclusion that this structural conformity has a being independent of either the harvest moon, the hunter's moon and so on, on the one hand, or Peter, James and John on the other. For instance, if we used pebbles, or any other objects, to represent the one set, we would then be able to use the self-same pebbles, and no more nor less, to represent the other.

Hence through the abstraction of symbolism we come to the concept of the independence of numbers.

Numbers are more than an abstract type of pebbles. since they express also the transferability of one set of pebbles from its role as symbol of one set of objects to a role as symbol of another set. When we use numbers we are not just counting, but making a statement about structural similarity.

Let us, to test this. imagine a counting system in which there are no numbers. You do it by appointing a pebble of a standard size to stand for each individual. then measuring the quantity by putting the pebbles into a standard-sized tin. When each tin is full you take another of the same size. until at some stage you have enough filled tins to fill a larger but equally standard-sized box. There is opportunity also for fractions, in that other tins and boxes could be half this size (though one would have to be careful in defining that), and so on.

We will then achieve the concepts 'tin-ful', 'box-ful', 'box-and-a-half-ful', etc., to 'crate-ful', 'shed-ful', wherever one wants to stop. It would be cumbersome, but it would work. It is only when one wants to put this counting system to the use of expressing structural conformity that we realise that we are now, quite suddenly, dealing with surrogate numbers.

One might for instance, having counted up, boast of the possession of a crate-ful of cattle and a crate-ful of wives; pebble for pebble one would know that it was the same amount. At that point 'crate-ful' has now become a number.

Prior to that point, however, a man accustomed to this capacity-measurement form of counting might well be disposed to deny the existence of numbers. Confronted by Pythagoras he could in fact attempt to demonstrate that there are no numbers. What he would mean by that, however, is that he did not have a use for the concept. Is that, then, what it amounts to? Numbers exist for Pythagoras because Pythagoras uses numbers. They do not exist for our tin and box man because he has no need for them. It is a purely practical matter?

Yet in saying that we are allowing that in certain circumstances, for one reason or another, numbers exist. That is perhaps the counterpart of our discovery that the structural similarity between the summation of the individuals accompanying Christ and the annual lunations is an objective and independent quality. We have made sense of both the relative and the absolute form of the existence of numbers.

Now if there is any sense, however slight, in which we do wish to be able to assert or deny the existence of universals and of numbers, how is their form or nature to be imagined? What is meant by saying that they, rather than merely their effects, exist?

From our examples it appears that the sense is this: there is a functional place for these abstract terms in our dealings with the world. They exist in that they serve a purpose. It is not simply that if they did not exist we should have to invent them. We do not cast around for new concepts as we would if the problem pre-existed the solution, or turn up with them under our arm at the universal patents office. The Philips screwdriver is not a solution to, but rather a part of, the Philips screw. You cannot have one without the other. The problem almost presupposes its solution.

Is this to say, after all, that abstract qualities have a purely linguistic identity? Only in the trivial sense that they can be located in language, their role identified there, and not in the physical world. This phenomenon is not (as we shall see further) all that unusual. To say that something has a place in language is not to identify it as being exclusively linguistic. But what then is its non-linguistic being?

Perhaps it is unfortunate that many decades of empiricism have led us to think of physical objects as being the chosen race. But if these examples are true it is apparent that something can perfectly well be imposed on us by experience without having to be a physical object. The nature of such things is experiential.

All this section has attempted to do is consider what is meant, what is intended, when the word 'exist' is used in such cases. The answer (which will now be developed further) can be viewed in two different ways, from as it were two directions. On the one hand, circumstances make us tend to undertake certain actions, of which the use of the word 'exist' in certain contexts is one, rather as the presence of a wall inclines us towards using the door. On the other hand one can correspondingly infer a likely use of the word 'exist' in its normal, correct sense, by observation of such behaviour, as if passing through doors implies the reality of walls. This will now be our continuing theme: to use the word 'exist' correctly one must be inclined to behave in certain ways.

References

- 1 Metaphysics 13, 4, 1078 B 32. 'Socrates. a source book', compiled by JOHN FERGUSON. Macmillan 1970, p. 181.
- 2 Phaedo 65B-66A trs. G. M. A. GRUBE 'Plato's Thought'. Methuen 1935, pp. 15-16.
- 3 Ibid. 74A-75D. trs. H. TREDENNICK. Penguin 1954.
- 4 Ibid. 100B-E.
- 5 Op.cit.
- 6 Ibid. 74D.
- 7 10. 596.
- 8 Ibid. 597.
- 9 Loc.cit.
- 10 Phaedo. 65B-66A. op.cit.
- 11 211B-212A.
- 12 Above, p. 42.
- 13 See RALPH W. CLARK'S 'The Existence of Universals', New Scholasticism 35. Summer 1981. pp. 363-372, where he argues that particulars are the basic entities and concepts of universals are parasitic upon concepts of particulars.
- 14 I am indebted to Dr. Paul Helm for the considerations in this footnote. See also L. WITTGENSTEIN, 'The Blue and Brown Books' Blackwell, 1972, pp. 133-5, where he discusses the common feature between different shades

of the same colour and makes the point that 'similar' covers a wide variety of cases. There is no uniformity of what things, such as shades of colour, have in common. 'To say that we use the word "blue" to mean 'what all these shades of colour have in common' by itself says nothing more than that we use the word "blue" in all these cases.' (p. 135)

- 15 See K. KOFFKA'S identification of the distinction between 'Things and Not-Things' in 'Principles of Gestalt Psychology'. Further note and references given below, p. 228.

II. 2.

The World of Science and Medicine

When one makes an existential claim, the subject of which is described by a medical or a scientific term, is this necessarily and always a proposal? That is, a proposal that such-and-such a collection of symptoms, behavioural patterns or phenomena shall be called 'dyslexia', 'the unconscious', 'tuberculosis' or 'gravitational collapse'. Is a claim that such things exist always a covert definition? Or is there (as is implied by the fact that making the proposal is evidently thought to be worthwhile) a secure informational residue, an ostensive element?

Plato's answer would be to do with acting, would therefore depend on whether or not the bundle which we thus put together has identity in its effects (1); and in particular cases this, as we have seen, becomes a matter of something being experienced, something observable (2). This procedure, however, comes up against the test of its marginal cases, since there are, in real life, many instances of things which we are inclined to say exist yet which, for one reason or another, observation cannot confirm.

In science, for instance, there are doubts and disputes about the existence of the latest micro-particle, or in astronomy the latest quasar. There is reason to suppose that these things exist, yet it is not compelling or at least not yet. Now here the empirical nature of the exercise is made manifest by the procedure: we go on trying to find out. It is agreed what counts as observation, and what will count as proof. It is therefore this activity which enables us to distinguish between the informational statement and the proposal, the discovery and the invention.

There is, however, a range of cases in which apparently similar statements are made which cannot be so clearly investigated. There are some things which cannot be directly observed, for practical and accidental reasons: such as the books in Berkeley's closet. There are other terms which refer to posited entities which cannot be observed directly in principle, but can only be known in their indirect effects. 'The mind exists, in addition to the brain' is not intended to imply that the mind may be observed under the microscope. More extreme cases make this feature even more obvious. 'The soul exists' posits an essentially dimensionless entity. 'The astral body exists', and so on.

It is thus that we come to deal with statements of the form 'the unconscious exists'. It will shortly become clear to us that what is peculiar about this and related statements is that they appear to be of the same type as the statements about particles or quasars, whereas they are really of the same type as those about minds or souls - that is, of a type for which it is understood in advance that the item referred to cannot simply be produced as verification. What makes the matter interesting, and in fact gives rise to the number of puzzles and problems which we will investigate in this sub-section, is that all these statements appear, at face value, to be of the same form.

There are clearly items in our world which rely for their existence on a proposal; there is no contradiction there. If that situation is clear, it will correspondingly be clear that there are items which do not. Thus: 'the United Nations exists' - one can satisfy oneself of that by seeing a facsimile of its charter. 'British Telecom exists' - it was established in separation from the Post Office and offered to the public by means of various Acts of Parliament. (N).

N: It is perhaps stretching the imagination somewhat to provide examples of these statements actually being used. (On the matter of settling the Falklands dispute? 'The United Nations does exist, you know'.) Cases of genuine doubt may be rare, but the significant point is the method of resolution which would be applicable if they arose.

Now something which relies ultimately for its existence on a charter or an Act of Parliament is clearly the subject of a proposal. It is no less effective for that. But it was not discovered, rather it was invented.

Freud was aware of the distinction and the danger, since he was careful to give effective action as the basis for his assertion that the unconscious exists: "When anyone objects that in a scientific sense the unconscious has no reality, that it is a mere makeshift, (N) une façon de parler, we must resign ourselves with a shrug to rejecting his statement as incomprehensible. Something unreal, which can nevertheless produce something so real and palpable as an obsessive action!" (3)

It is the fact that the unconscious can produce an effect which makes it real. We shall see before the end of this section that this is at the least misleading; but for the moment let us simply recognise that Freud has made a valid distinction. Something which can produce effects which are real and palpable is not just a figure of speech.

N: In German 'Notbehelf': literally a 'need-expedient'

What then, we may ask, was going on before Freud discovered the unconscious? People were presumably simply performing obsessive actions, and so on, without any identifiable cause. Before the term 'dyslexia' was coined, people were failing to learn certain language skills. We had the phenomena, without the explanation. But there is a striking difference between such things and, for instance, the discovery of the source of the Zambesi. To diagnose dyslexia, or to identify the unconscious, one puts together a number of effects which were not previously connected. What has been discovered, in fact is not dyslexia itself, but a relationship between disparate phenomena. Let us put this another way.

If dyslexia is a condition which gives rise to certain symptoms, then it must have existed even before being named. If however it is not a prior condition, but a nexus, the form in which various things are connected, then it is they (plus their joint structure) rather than it, which exists; and there would be no need to imagine it pre-existing them. However in so far as the relationship between the elements was there even before being identified as dyslexia, then dyslexia would be discovered rather than invented, and its existence would be independent of its being named.

On either interpretation, to say that dyslexia exists is to say more than that the behavioural acts themselves exist: it is to say that they are related in some specific way, either (on the one hand) by having a common cause - 'dyslexia' - or by possessing a structured connection, which recurs in the same form - 'dyslexia' - whenever sufficient of those acts themselves recur.

Those are two ways of making sense of the claim that dyslexia exists. But what if someone were to maintain that dyslexia did not exist? It seems that a number of things might be intended. It might be held that the phenomena were not regularly related, their conjunction being fortuitous, and that they should therefore be treated as separate, or in an ad hoc and not in a programmed way. The test of this claim would be the regularity or otherwise of the conjunction of effects, plus the success or failure of a schematic approach to treatment. We would also need to assure ourselves that such cases of apparent success were not a confidence trick or a joint delusion.

A similar but not identical meaning to the denial might be that the symptoms were simply a group of symptoms, and that nothing would be gained by looking beyond them for a syndrome, (a subject to be dealt with shortly), and this claim would be tested in the same way. There is, in other words, an essentially practical aspect to the discussion of the existence of dyslexia.

Such terms however appear to offer more than an approach to a programme of action. They appear to propose a causal aspect to a heuristic situation, such that the value of the statement might be academic or informational, rather than just useful. This supposed explanatory factor will occupy us again when we deal more specifically with scientific terms. Before doing so, however, I would like to investigate a little further this distinction between the pragmatic element in medical existential statements, and whatever other content they might have.

A useful distinction which has been made in medicine is between nosographic and nosologic terms. (4). Nosographic terms are those which describe a condition; nosologic terms are those which account for it. There are two aspects to this important distinction. Firstly, nosologic terms point to an item of some sort, say a virus or a chemical compound, which lies outside the symptoms being observed and in a causal relation to them, whereas nosographic terms do not. Secondly, nosologic but not nosographic terms imply the possibility of a programme of long-term action, beyond the mere treatment of symptoms. They have, in other words, a temporal dimension, indicating both the past cause and future cure; whereas nosographic terms are essentially spatial, dealing only with what is present.

Plainly since medicine is a purposive discipline it will favour a terminology which aids its ends. and thus the pragmatic element will influence any decision as to what to identify. Does this mean that something will exist if acceptance of its existence is useful in the terms already set by the context of the discussion, and not exist if that is otiose? We have seen above that one way of testing such an existential statement, and one used in real life, would be 'the success or failure of a programmed approach to treatment'. (5).

Although this seems an arbitrary way of assigning existence - by its practical usefulness - it is in fact closely related to other common ways. We would not in general accept an existential claim if there were no evidence for it - if, in fact, its acceptance or denial made absolutely no difference. This is for the simple reason, perhaps among others, that we do not in general waste our breath. Thus there is a programmatic aspect (which the medical terms have helped us see more clearly) to every existential statement. There is a 'so what?' to be answered. This is perhaps nothing mysterious or innovatory: it is akin to the positivist approach, in that it requires that something observable should be happening.

A question has been asked. in the meantime. which it will pay us not to ignore: 'Does this mean that something will exist if acceptance of its existence is useful ...?' If we move the discussion now from medicine to science we may work towards an answer.

Science does not on the face of it present such a pragmatic nature as medicine. Part at least of its identity is supposed to be purely descriptive. As a structured form of 'knowledge' it purports to set out factual information in an unambiguous form. There is, however, another side to it. which may or may not be an adulteration of its pure purpose. but nevertheless forms part of its normal usage. There is a supposed explanatory factor.

In other words, much science sets out to be 'nosologic'. It is not content with a 'nosographic' role.

Thus when in medicine a condition is diagnosed as tuberculosis, it is not intended that a tendency to cough, and so on, is thus redescribed, but rather a claim is being made also about the analysis of a blood sample, about the virus made visible by the microscope, the effectiveness of certain antibiotics in its destruction, or whatever.

When Freud speaks of the unconscious, he does not mean that phobias, obsessive actions, recurrent dreams, etc., may be thus grouped together and given a collective label, but rather that under hypnosis or in the course of analysis the patient will reveal items of his past of which he had become unaware, which by elimination must persist in the realm of the unconscious; and that the process of revealing these suppressed memories may relieve the symptoms.

There is, however, a crucial difference between these two cases, which we may as well state at once, although it will occupy us further. In the first case there is something to put under the microscope - a virus - and in the second case there is not. When astronomers infer the existence of the planet Neptune, and nuclear physicists that of the latest micro-particle - shall we call it the minitron - they go about their business in the same way as Freud and the doctors. They notice irregularities in the behaviour of observable phenomena - the other planets, other particles - which are not explicable in terms of any data already possessed, but which would be adequately explained by Neptune or the minitron. They then produce those entities, like a white rabbit out of a hat. And yet it is not an illusion; it is a real white rabbit. (6).

It will not do, under such circumstances, to maintain that there is a white rabbit in the hat but not produce it. Such rabbits are of no interest to us, because their contribution leaves the situation in all respects the same as there being no white rabbit in the hat. We want to see the rabbit.

Now Freud is in an ambiguous position, faced with this request. In his own terms he can display the unconscious to us: its effects are real and palpable. And yet when he does so he only points to phenomena which were already there, which have been there all along, and which we all knew about already. He cannot produce the new item to correlate to his new term, show us the virus under the microscope, the existence of which we did not know, show us the planet through the telescope, likewise invisible to the naked eye.

The question is: can we clearly distinguish between a term which identifies something previously unobserved, and one which points to a systematic complexity in the relationship of events (which are themselves already known about). It will now be suggested (a) that we can, according to a formula shortly to be discussed; (b) that both are valid existential statements; but, crucially (c) that very much confusion on the issue arises when one type pretends to be the other, or indeed when the claimant is unaware of the distinction.

It is this conclusion, (c), which makes the exercise worth undertaking.

Now we have seen that in the case of certain medical and scientific terms an implicit claim is being made as to their heuristic value. That is, it is assumed that they assist in explaining, or expanding our understanding of, the phenomena. They are not thought to be simply a redescription, a neater or more accurate way of saying what takes place, a sort of shorthand.

There are, by contrast, terms which make no heuristic claim, but set out simply to name the data before us, adding nothing to it in the way of invoking an agency beyond the data in explanation. I am going to say of such terms that they are co-extensive with the phenomena. They do not pretend to deal with anything other than what we have before us. This is not to say that that means that they say nothing. They draw our attention to a state of affairs. They can, as I suggested, make perfectly valid existential claims, while remaining co-extensive and non-heuristic. Let me look a bit more closely at these points, taking the co-extensiveness question first.

Jung uses the phrase 'the collective unconscious' to refer to the fact that experiences of a number of phenomena - dreams, images, symbols, etc. - are held in common by

different people. Does 'the collective unconscious' describe the collection of phenomena, or is it something beyond them?

In the first case, in which it is co-extensive with the phenomena, nothing has been added to the data which we already had. One might then ask the question: do we really need this new name? This is a matter of expediency, and if for one reason or another use of the name is convenient, then all is well. We can proceed to talk of the collective unconscious.

If on the other hand the name does not stand for a simple summation, but for something outside this group of items, then a different question must be asked. One can then inquire for instance what or where it is, and in this case there is something more to be explained. There are on the one hand the dreams, images and symbols; and then there is the collective unconscious as well. (N overleaf)

One may perhaps generalise this principle. If the name is co-extensive with the phenomena, then we may ask about its usefulness. If it is not co-extensive, then one may ask about its identity.

The way the first question is answered determines whether the second one is going to be a linguistic or an ontological question. {See diagram following footnote overleaf}

N: It might seem at first sight that there is some correspondence between this distinction between terms which are co-extensive with the phenomena and terms which are not, on the one hand, and Locke's distinction between real and nominal essences on the other. Closer inspection will reveal that the point being made by Locke is on a different subject and results in conclusions unrelated to mine.

Real and nominal essences are distinguished in the 'Essay' (7) according to whether the way we divide the world up for linguistic purposes (nominal essences) corresponds to the way the world is divided up by its own nature (real essences). Thus for instance in the case of a geometric figure such as a triangle the real and nominal essences directly coincide, but in the case of most material objects, the real essences of which may often be beyond our full knowledge, they probably do not.

In setting out the co-extensiveness principle here it is not intended to say that for the term N to be co-extensive with the phenomena is for it to match their reality in such a way. For a term to be co-extensive with the phenomena means simply that the term N summarises or re-describes the phenomena which are under consideration and does not, in such a case, refer to anything beyond them.

N: cont...

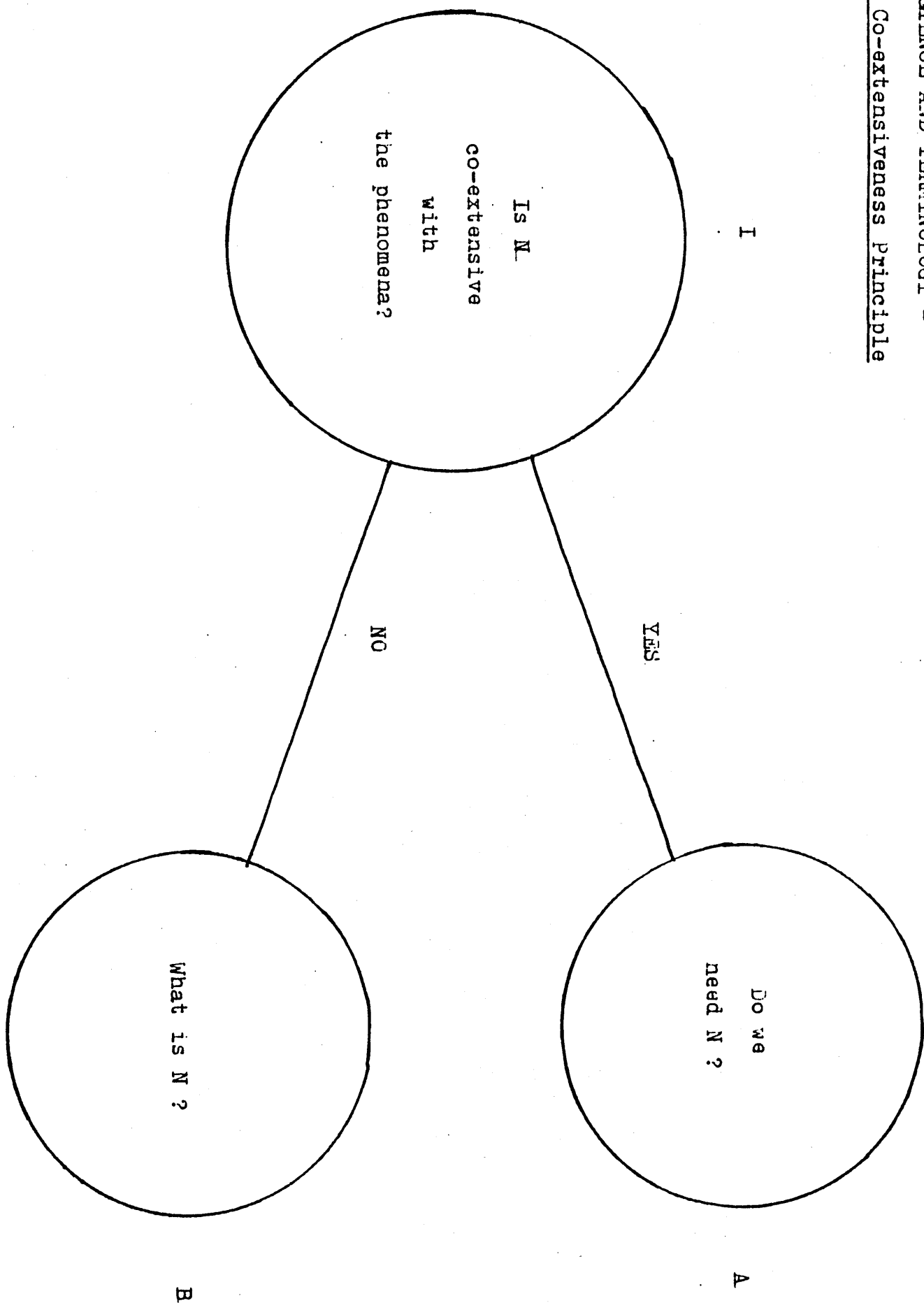
In order to see why quite different things are being dealt with here let us take as an example the term 'tuberculosis'. It will then, I hope, be seen that Locke and the present discussion are concerned with different matters.

Locke would say that if the world contains, in its nature, a separate and distinct condition corresponding to the perception which we call 'tuberculosis', then the nominal essence and the real essence are the same in this case. He adds that in most cases our state of knowledge is so incomplete that we cannot be sure of this.

Per contra, we are here saying that if the term 'tuberculosis' turned out to describe nothing but the nasty cough, etc., which we knew about and which gave rise to our decision to produce a term in the first place, then it would be co-extensive with the phenomena and we should proceed accordingly. As it happens it does more than this in that it indicates a causal virus which in turn suggests a course of treatment, so that it is not co-extensive.

EXISTENCE AND TERMINOLOGY -

The Co-extensiveness Principle



Note that if one wishes to say that N causes the phenomena, then one has to answer 'No' to question I, and move on to ontology (II B). If you hold that N is a description of the phenomena, and answering 'Yes' move on to semantics (II A), then it cannot bear any relation to them.

Because a causal relation is possible in the former but not the latter case, only the former can be explanatory. Something which appears to be of type B, and therefore capable of explanatory force, but which is in fact of type A, bears what one may call a pseudo-heuristic status. If many scientific terms turned out to be of this type, it might be because to be of type B they would leave their users in the position of having to answer yet one more question: and the liability to regression could threaten to nullify the potential heuristic value.

The problem which such terms appear to solve tends to re-instate itself in either case. If on the one hand the collective unconscious is to be taken to be not itself a separate entity but rather the sum of the phenomena - common themes and symbols, forms, and dreams, and so on - then it is simply a restatement of the problem, and if the question were 'how do x, y, z occur?' one could thus restate it by using the directly equivalent group name, and say 'how does the collective unconscious occur?'. .

Although nothing would be any worse for this translation, nothing would be any better either, except for the small saving in time or space effected.

On the other hand, if the collective unconscious is taken to be something separate from the phenomena, in the form for instance of a common cause, then we have simply added one more item to the list of things to be explained, and might say not 'how do x, y, z occur?' but now 'how do x, y, z and the collective unconscious occur?'

It must not be assumed, however, that the imminence of a regression means that no such terms can have heuristic content. To produce the planet Neptune is to have explained the errant behaviour of other planets. To isolate the tuberculosis virus is to have explained the onset of an illness. Certainly the questions 'What causes the coming into existence of the tuberculosis virus/the planet Neptune?' are of great interest. But it is not necessarily our task to answer them, in the course of this first heuristic step. One might say: 'answering those second-order questions is someone else's business. I have done my job, in the terms in which I set it out.'

This is the difference between heuristic and pseudo-heuristic terms. If it were the case that in instances of supposed collective unconscious nothing whatsoever could be produced, beyond the items which are to be explained, then nothing in the way of explanation would have been achieved. Once again, we want to see the rabbit.

The absence of a further item, where one is implied, does not mean that nothing informative is being said; but it does mean that what is being said is not what is claimed is being said.

We are, in effect, back to the distinction between a proposal and a discovery, and the question as to whether all scientific and medical terms are of the nature of a proposal. The answer, in view of our recent investigations, would appear to be 'only if they are type A, not if they are type B'. To summarise: terms which have a genuinely heuristic force, type B terms, are able to produce an item such as a planet or a virus which stands in a separate and often causal relation to the observed phenomena. Pseudo-heuristic terms, type A terms, add nothing to the grouped data except a name, and in answer to the demand 'let us see the virus/planet equivalent' produce only the original data.

It might be objected, however, that in the case of type A terms, something, no matter what, has caused us to group the phenomena securely enough to attribute to them a name. It might be, for instance, an innate structure in their relationship, such as a tendency to occur together or to combine to give rise to further effects.

Let us now consider this possible objection to the above preliminary conclusion further, taking as a starting point some work on the subject done by Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein's 'family resemblance' metaphor

In Philosophical Investigations. part I. Wittgenstein considers what is common to all the activities which we call language that makes them all language. (8). He concludes that it is not a common element so much as a relationship. He then (9) takes the example of games. "What is common to them all? - Don't say: 'There must be something common, or they would not be called "games"' - but look and see whether there is anything common to all. For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all. but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that." Examples of games reveal overlap, but no common element: "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing ..." (10)

This he decides to call 'family resemblances' (11), "for the various resemblances between members of a family ... overlap and criss-cross in the same way." He also uses another metaphor for this, that of a rope: "the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres." (12)

"One might say that the concept 'game' is a concept with blurred edges." (13) "If someone were to draw a sharp boundary I could not acknowledge it as the one that I too always wanted to draw. or had drawn in my mind. For I did not want to draw one at all." (14) "Only let us understand what 'inexact' means. For it does not mean 'unusable'." (15)

No doubt much effort has been expended on the question of whether or not games do have a common feature; but this is not really Wittgenstein's point. Using the idea of family resemblances between games as an example, he means to say that we are quite happy to use a word without having to decide beforehand on its definite boundaries, its precise limits. This is a perfectly acceptable comment on the flexibility of language; but it does not mean that a definition of games isn't all the time available to us, as it were in case we need it. What, indeed, happens when we do need it? People start getting killed: 'this isn't a game any more.' 'Why not?' 'Because games are for fun, games are not serious,' and so on.

We operate successfully with the blurred concept 'games' because we possess enough knowledge of its precise limits to know when its use is appropriate, when inappropriate.

We do not have to have thought about this or discussed it beforehand, because it is part of the way we have learnt our language, just as in learning to swim you pick up all sorts of essential points, such as not opening your mouth when under water, which no-one has to tell you are part of any particular stroke.

Imagine someone - a foreigner, perhaps - using the word 'game' wrongly. He speaks of the jobbers at the Stock Exchange, where millions of pounds are changing hands, as playing a game. We are puzzled at first, and then explain that a game is only such activity as has no serious practical consequences. Perhaps he will then refuse to change his usage, citing Philosophical Investigations Part I, 71, 76, and 88.

When Wittgenstein says: "But is it senseless to say: 'Stand roughly there?' Suppose that I were standing with someone in a city square and said that. As I say it I do not draw any kind of boundary, but perhaps point with my hand - as if I were indicating a particular spot. And this is just how one might explain to someone what a game is" (16), he is implicitly admitting that we will know in advance what counts as 'roughly'. There is a point beyond which no-one would consider the person as having conformed to the instruction.

Although we do not normally have to draw this line - 'not more than seven paces in any direction' - this does not mean that we would be unable to do so. or that doing so might not in some cases turn out to be useful. or necessary. as for instance when instructing a child. It is true that the decision as to what shall count as 'roughly' has to be arrived at in some way, either as a rule laid down by the user - 'this is what I mean by roughly' - or as an agreement arrived at by the various parties. I am certainly not claiming what Wittgenstein is denying by his use of the example: that we actually go through this procedure in normal cases of using a word. I am saying that the term is usable (and by extension, terms are usable) only because we could go through it if a case arose where it was in dispute, or subject to some other doubt.

When Wittgenstein says that the criss-crossing of relationships between games is like that of family resemblances, he means that we can recognise combinations of similarities without having to rely on a predetermined structure for them. Yet what is it that enables us to see these as (to adopt and use his metaphor) family resemblances? Is it not surely the fact that we are already equipped with the idea of a family? Equipped with some other category instead, and lacking that of kinship, we would handle the matter differently.

But we start with not just a blurred, cross-crossing idea of a family, but a clear and precisely formulatable one, that of (for instance) consanguinity. Certainly 'a family' in some cases may include in-laws and maybe others and Wittgenstein no doubt would refer to anthropological extensions, even perhaps to the Mafia; but this is to miss the point. When we are dealing with physical characteristics we are implicitly referring to a very definite use of the word 'family', such that we can say quite clearly what will count as being inside it, what beyond.

We do not say of all people with blue eyes, long noses, high-cheekbones and prominent chins that they have a family resemblance. We certainly would say this if we were already equipped with the knowledge that they were related by blood. There can be no use for the idea 'family resemblance' without a prior understanding of the idea 'family'.

Putting together the things which form the 'family resemblance' between games, for instance, involves already knowing that there are such things as games, and without that prior knowledge can not be done.

You could not therefore get that knowledge by studying the family resemblances. since they might be evidence of anything, or for all you would know, of nothing; but equipped with it you can deal with those effectively. Wittgenstein's image does not therefore help us to tackle the question of how a certain collection of symptoms constitute a syndrome, or indeed of how a definition may be achieved from the apparently kaleidoscopic assortment of characteristics.

Syndrome construction (N)

It was said above (17) that "to say that dyslexia exists is to say more than that the behavioural acts themselves exist: it is to say that they are related in some specific way, either (on the one hand) by having a common cause - 'dyslexia' - or by possessing a structured connection, which recurs in the same form - 'dyslexia' - whenever sufficient of these acts themselves recur."

N: A 'syndrome' is a combination of signs or symptoms indicating a particular disease or disorder. I am using the term here as a means of revealing some principles which apply, though less evidently, to the formulation of other concepts.

It might be objected, however, that in the case of type A terms, something, no matter what, has caused us to group the phenomena securely enough to attribute to them a name. It might be, for instance, an innate structure in their relationship, such as a tendency to occur together or to combine to give rise to further effects.

Let us now consider this possible objection to the above preliminary conclusion further, taking as a starting point some work on the subject done by Wittgenstein.

Duplicate

Wittgenstein's 'family resemblance' metaphor

In Philosophical Investigations. part I. Wittgenstein considers what is common to all the activities which we call language that makes them all language. (8). He concludes that it is not a common element so much as a relationship. He then (9) takes the example of games. "What is common to them all? - Don't say: 'There must be something common, or they would not be called "games"' - but look and see whether there is anything common to all. For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that." Examples of games reveal overlap, but no common element: "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing ..." (10)

This he decides to call 'family resemblances' (11), "for the various resemblances between members of a family ... overlap and criss-cross in the same way." He also uses another metaphor for this, that of a rope: "the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres." (12)

Duplicate

"One might say that the concept 'game' is a concept with blurred edges." (13) "If someone were to draw a sharp boundary I could not acknowledge it as the one that I too always wanted to draw. or had drawn in my mind. For I did not want to draw one at all." (14) "Only let us understand what 'inexact' means. For it does not mean 'unusable'." (15)

No doubt much effort has been expended on the question of whether or not games do have a common feature: but this is not really Wittgenstein's point. Using the idea of family resemblances between games as an example. he means to say that we are quite happy to use a word without having to decide beforehand on its definite boundaries, its precise limits. This is a perfectly acceptable comment on the flexibility of language; but it does not mean that a definition of games isn't all the time available to us. as it were in case we need it. What, indeed, happens when we do need it? People start getting killed: 'this isn't a game any more.' 'Why not?' 'Because games are for fun. games are not serious,' and so on.

We operate successfully with the blurred concept 'games' because we possess enough knowledge of its precise limits to know when its use is appropriate, when inappropriate.

Duplicate

We do not have to have thought about this or discussed it beforehand, because it is part of the way we have learnt our language, just as in learning to swim you pick up all sorts of essential points, such as not opening your mouth when under water, which no-one has to tell you are part of any particular stroke.

Imagine someone - a foreigner, perhaps - using the word 'game' wrongly. He speaks of the jobbers at the Stock Exchange, where millions of pounds are changing hands, as playing a game. We are puzzled at first, and then explain that a game is only such activity as has no serious practical consequences. Perhaps he will then refuse to change his usage, citing Philosophical Investigations Part I. 71, 76, and 88.

When Wittgenstein says: "But is it senseless to say: 'Stand roughly there?' Suppose that I were standing with someone in a city square and said that. As I say it I do not draw any kind of boundary, but perhaps point with my hand - as if I were indicating a particular spot. And this is just how one might explain to someone what a game is" (16), he is implicitly admitting that we will know in advance what counts as 'roughly'. There is a point beyond which no-one would consider the person as having conformed to the instruction.

Duplicate

Although we do not normally have to draw this line - 'not more than seven paces in any direction' - this does not mean that we would be unable to do so. or that doing so might not in some cases turn out to be useful. or necessary. as for instance when instructing a child. It is true that the decision as to what shall count as 'roughly' has to be arrived at in some way. either as a rule laid down by the user - 'this is what I mean by roughly' - or as an agreement arrived at by the various parties. I am certainly not claiming what Wittgenstein is denying by his use of the example: that we actually go through this procedure in normal cases of using a word. I am saying that the term is usable (and by extension. terms are usable) only because we could go through it if a case arose where it was in dispute, or subject to some other doubt.

When Wittgenstein says that the criss-crossing of relationships between games is like that of family resemblances. he means that we can recognise combinations of similarities without having to rely on a predetermined structure for them. Yet what is it that enables us to see these as (to adopt and use his metaphor) family resemblances? Is it not surely the fact that we are already equipped with the idea of a family? Equipped with some other category instead, and lacking that of kinship. we would handle the matter differently.

But we start with not just a blurred, cross-crossing idea of a family, but a clear and precisely formulatable one, that of (for instance) consanguinity. Certainly 'a family' in some cases may include in-laws and maybe others and Wittgenstein no doubt would refer to anthropological extensions, even perhaps to the Mafia: but this is to miss the point. When we are dealing with physical characteristics we are implicitly referring to a very definite use of the word 'family', such that we can say quite clearly what will count as being inside it, what beyond.

We do not say of all people with blue eyes, long noses, high-cheekbones and prominent chins that they have a family resemblance. We certainly would say this if we were already equipped with the knowledge that they were related by blood. There can be no use for the idea 'family resemblance' without a prior understanding of the idea 'family'.

Putting together the things which form the 'family resemblance' between games, for instance, involves already knowing that there are such things as games, and without that prior knowledge can not be done.

Duplicate

You could not therefore get that knowledge by studying the family resemblances. since they might be evidence of anything, or for all you would know, of nothing; but equipped with it you can deal with those effectively. Wittgenstein's image does not therefore help us to tackle the question of how a certain collection of symptoms constitute a syndrome, or indeed of how a definition may be achieved from the apparently kaleidoscopic assortment of characteristics.

Syndrome construction (N)

It was said above (17) that "to say that dyslexia exists is to say more than that the behavioural acts themselves exist: it is to say that they are related in some specific way, either (on the one hand) by having a common cause - 'dyslexia' - or by possessing a structured connection, which recurs in the same form - 'dyslexia' - whenever sufficient of these acts themselves recur."

N: A 'syndrome' is a combination of signs or symptoms indicating a particular disease or disorder. I am using the term here as a means of revealing some principles which apply, though less evidently, to the formulation of other concepts.

In the following passages I should like to analyse and generalise this doctotomy.

Let us therefore call the 'common cause' interpretation 'I' and the 'structured connection' interpretation 'II'. What are the elements of each? Taking I first, its elements would appear to consist of a number of observed phenomena, a, b, c, \dots, n , and a common cause, Q . We might convey its form by writing $Q:a, b, c, \dots, n$. The problem will clearly be to know how many separate data to include between c and n . To say that any are to be included which have Q as their cause is to indulge in circularity, since it is being claimed, by applying a name to this grouping, that Q is the cause of anything which is included.

We will deal with this problem shortly. Let us first take a look at the structure of II. Again we have an unspecified number of observed items or events, a, b, c, \dots, n . In place of the common cause, Q , we have a regularity of relationship between them, R . It is perhaps important not to think of R as being something separated from a, b, c, \dots, n , since its own identity is the way they are ordered. Certainly a structure, relationship or connection is in an ambiguous position, since it both is and is not a further thing.

But the important point for our purposes is that R could not have any identity at all without a.b.c....n. whereas. in interpretation I, Q could. One should perhaps question this point a little more closely before accepting it.

Q could be the cause of another set of circumstances entirely: Q: x,y,z....0 is another syndrome, which would be known by another name. Thus for instance an applied source of heat causes water to boil and evaporate, but causes lead to melt and flow. Fire can thus be the cause either of something one would call boiling, or of something one would call dissolving. To revert to our medical examples. the common cold germ can cause bronchial ailments, a cough and painful chest. or nasal ones. sneezing and runny nose, or again pharyngeal ones, a sore throat and vocal hoarseness. The same virus (it is thought) causes either chickenpox or shingles. No doubt many examples could be given. but the point is not controversial.

It is not immediately clear that R cannot in the same way be transferred, as it were, from a,b,c. to x,y,z. If it is the principle of organisation. then it can occur anywhere. in the company of diverse phenomena. Thus for instance either buildings or soldiers can form a square. snowflakes and flowers be symmetrical, trees and lampposts equidistant.

But if it is the relationship of a,b,c. the particular thing that they have together, a joint quality of theirs, the spatio-temporal facts (for instance) which they share, then there is something about it which can clearly not belong to a situation involving x,y,z.

This is not just a matter of definition, but an observation of a way of looking at the situation a,b,c. What we are saying is that there is an 'a', a 'b', and a 'c', not just one by one, but together. And that being so, it is inevitable that there will be a relationship between them. Perhaps one might now summarise the dichotomy as follows:

- I. Q: a,b,c,...n.
- II. (a,b,c,...n)R.

- although neither this, nor any other formula, entirely expresses the intrinsic nature, to a,b,c,...n, of R.

Now to some extent, of course, there is a relationship between any two or more items one might like to choose. One might, if one wanted, specify the distances and directions between say, the Prime Minister, the planet Venus, and the Empire State Building, on any one particular occasion. It is not even necessary for them to occur contemporaneously. There is a relationship, describable chronologically and physically, between Shakespeare, Arthur Scargill and the Martyrs' Memorial.

This is why the principle of regularity of structure is important to the concept of a syndrome, in interpretation II. If it were the case that every time b occurred, there was the same relationship between it (however loosely specified) and a and c, then one would be entitled to posit an instance of R. This is something which could not be said of our examples. If every time Arthur Scargill occurred (whatever that might mean), he was the same distance in time from William Shakespeare and in space from The Martyrs' Memorial, then there would be reason to assign R. The improbability of this, indeed the incoherence of it, demonstrates the special nature of syndromes. A possible objection to this demonstration serves to illustrate another point; it is important that the regularity of relationship should occur between more than two items. If it were objected that Shakespeare will always be related to Scargill in the same way, to the extent of being before him, we would reply that that applies to many millions of other things, and would only start to take an interest if The Martyrs' Memorial turned out always to be to his left.

What shall count as regularity is a delicate matter, and the way this is dealt with in normal life represents the fine tuning of the business of syndrome construction.

Regularity of chronological occurrence by itself will clearly not do. or one would have a whole set of syndromes stemming from the initial condition of drinking milk or breathing air. Similarly co-occurrence by itself is not enough. Yet either of these may be important to the identification of a syndrome, given a further degree of relational complexity.

Clearly one does not want to say, even if one could, exactly what degree of complexity must be reached before we stop having a case of co-incidence and have a syndrome. What one can say, however, is that this decision is closely related to the one mentioned above, the question of how many integers lie between c and n . (18). Clearly the greater the number of items related, the greater will be the complexity of the relationship, and so the more secure the identification of the regular relationship R , and hence the more highly-defined the syndrome.

It has often been said (and Wittgenstein's examples are an illustration of the same point) that in normal language-usage concepts are open-ended. This is to be contrasted, perhaps, with formal languages such as those of logic and mathematics. What is meant by this, in the terms we are at present using, is that there is no law about how many items must lie between c and n ; nor even, presumably that there must be any.

Since we are concerned with the relationship of phenomena and interested in the regularity of its structure, there must presumably be a 'c', since one could not identify the structure of the relationship between a pair of items on its own, except in the broadest and least useful way. The point made above is important here: the greater the complexity the more secure the identification of the named occurrence which we are trying to identify, and which we here call a syndrome. It follows from this that we would be likely to have difficulty agreeing about a supposed syndrome having only the elements 'a' and 'b'.

We must agree in the meantime that in general there is no law on this matter, and that therefore in particular cases there must be a decision. The decision about which variables to include in any particular case is not, however, just a matter of going for the largest possible number. One further complication obstructs such an easy course.

'Upper and lower case' conditions

To summarise the position dealt with in this sub-section: when we examine the symptoms which form the elements of a syndrome, or the conditions which define a particular concept, we find that some of them appear to have a stronger role than others. Indeed it seems that there may be two types, strong elements and weak, to the extent that some may be regarded as necessary, and others only as sufficient conditions, in combination with one or more necessary ones.

The situation will now be set out in more detail. Let us start with some examples.

It cannot be influenza unless there is a fever. That is, whatever other symptoms of flu are present, there must be some other explanation for the disorder, if there is no fever. In this case this is because of what we know about the influenza germ, other germs having different effects. A fever is a necessary condition of a case of influenza.

This is not to say that a fever on its own indicates influenza. There must be other symptoms of the influenza syndrome for us to be sure that it is not something else, such as malaria. A fever is not, on its own, a sufficient condition of a case of flu.

In some cases the matter may be one of definition. and so the statement 'it can't be X without p' is analytic. The co-called 'Hiroshima syndrome'. for instance. applies to people who die of cancer some time after being subjected to radiation. It thus sets out to distinguish these from others who die of cancer without the prior condition. and being subjected to radiation is therefore a defining factor. hence the name. It will consequently be a necessary condition. but for logical rather than incidental reasons.

Let us now illustrate a common but fairly complex situation. in which a number of characteristics may be sufficient. individually or together, provided that one or more non-sufficient condition is also present.

If you are a late reader we would not assume at once that you suffered from dyslexia. because the condition could be attributed to other causes. such as poor teaching. home problems. low IQ.

Similarly if you were a poor speller. we would be in the same position.

Therefore even if you were a late reader and a poor speller. we could still not say confidently that it was a case of dyslexia.

And again if you were otherwise intelligent and with normal memory ability but unable to remember how to spell a word moments after being told, dyslexia might be indicated but without further information one would perhaps not have the right to rule out mere inattentiveness or lack of interest.

If however you tended to write letters backwards, we would be inclined to diagnose dyslexia without further information. (N) We would not easily be able to think of another reason.

Similarly if you were unable to recognise whole words, and if someone else in the family were affected, we would at once recognise a probable case of dyslexia.

The first three are weak conditions, the second two are strong ones. Although the latter might not be sufficient on their own (and we will assume for the sake of consistency that this would always be the case) any combination of them with weak conditions or with each other would be sufficient. Let us identify them by letter, as follows:

late reader	x	letters backwards	A
poor speller	y	trouble with whole words	B
forgetting spelling	z		

N: I am here only giving examples for the sake of illustrating an argument, and do not propose to defend a medical position.

Now to generalise from this, it is clear that $A + B$ forms a sufficient condition, and that either or both A and B form a necessary one. No combinations of x, y, z , however, form either. Progressing, we find that $A + x$, or $B + x$, and so on, would be sufficient combinations of the upper case and the lower case conditions, and we will thus be able to set out the range of options for the identification of a syndrome, or by extension a concept, N :

Syndrome construction: upper and lower case conditions. Given the identification of two upper case and three lower case conditions, a set of events is identified as N if it possesses the characteristics represented by any one of the following:

$A + B$	$A + x + z$
$A + x$	$B + x + z$
$B + x$	$A + B + x + z$
$A + B + x$	$A + y + z$
$A + y$	$B + y + z$
$B + y$	$A + B + y + z$
$A + B + y$	$A + x + y + z$
$A + x + y$	$B + x + y + z$
$B + x + y$	$A + B + x + y + z$
$A + B + x + y$	$A + z$
$B + z$	

From this, using the sign ' v ' to represent a disjunction ('either or both') we may formulate a set of sufficient conditions, as follows:

$$1. \quad A + B$$

or

$$2. \quad (A \vee B) + ((x \vee y) \vee z)$$

It is important to bear in mind that the distinction between upper and lower case conditions, in this analysis, is not an arbitrary decision, but a matter of fact which may be determined by observation. Do people say 'If it displays A it must be N' and 'Yes, if it involves both A and B then it is definitely N', and act accordingly? We may observe them and see. (N)

It is hoped that this analysis demonstrates both the extent and the limits of the open-endedness, or open-texture, of terms or concepts. It replaces Wittgenstein's 'family resemblance' image with a survey of what may actually happen, and it is intended to avoid not only the unwanted vagueness of a semantic approach but also any tendency to imply an unreal rigidity. The message is complexity, but complexity within bounds.

N: Compare the distinction made by Professor T. R. Miles (19) between 'samples' and 'symptoms' of a condition. Miles then proceeds to make use of the terms 'greater and lesser exemplaries' to describe a distinction similar to my 'upper and lower case conditions'.

The relevance of this to the 'convention/experience' investigation is that it reveals the extent to which agreement is involved, and even helps us to see the method by which agreement may be reached.

References

- 1 See the discussion of 'dynamis'. above. pp. 22-25.
- 2 Above. pp. 28. 42-43.
- 3 FREUD. S. 'Introductory Lecture on Psycho-Analysis'.
trs. Joan Riviere. Allen & Unwin, 1922. pp. 234-5.
- 4 HERMANN. K. 'Reading Disability'. Copenhagen.
Munksgaard. 1959; cited in HARZEM & MILES.
'Conceptual Issues in Operant Psychology' John Wiley
& Sons, 1978. p. 99.
- 5 Above. p. 143.
- 6 This point is dealt with along similar lines by T. R.
MILES in 'Eliminating the Unconscious'. Pergamon
Press 1966. p. 81.
- 7 III. iii. 15-19.
- 8 WITTGENSTEIN. L. 'Philosophical Investigations'.
Oxford University Press, Blackwell, 1953. 65.
(References are to numbered paragraphs).
- 9 Ibid. 66.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Op. cit. 67.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Op. cit. 71.
- 14 Op. cit. 76.
- 15 Op. cit. 88.

- 16 Op. cit. 71.
- 17 Above. p. 143 Emphasis added.
- 18 Above. p. 164.
- 19 MILES T. R. 'Eliminating the Unconscious'. Pergamon Press. 1966. p.124.

It might be helpful at this point to identify the position we have now reached, in terms of the programme set out in the Abstract. We are now just past the middle of the section which forms the core of this investigation, and before proceeding must deal with a related but slightly oblique topic. A great amount of work has been done by others (1) on the apparent problem that amongst the whole range of things which exist there seem to be some things which do not exist. These form a less important part of the present work than of that of others, but they certainly require to be dealt with, and that takes place in this subsection.

We therefore turn now to a consideration of the position of existence statements in the field of cases where we know, for one reason or another, that an item spoken of does not exist.

On What There Isn't (2)

"If I say 'The present King of France is bald', that implies that the present King of France exists." (3)

Russell is concerned with the subject of statements containing a name which stands for something which, for one reason or another, does not exist. We all feel intuitively uncomfortable with this concept: how can a name stand for something, if there is no such something? Indeed, how can there be something which is not? Russell disposes of the apparent contradiction by substituting descriptions for names. The details of this scheme have been dealt with in I.4 (4) and need not delay us here. (5)

Leonard Linsky comments: "Anyone content to regard 'Santa Claus lives at the North Pole' as false will be able to live with Russell's version of this treating 'Santa Claus' as a disguised description having primary occurrence." (6) He continues: "There are arguments supporting the Russellian view. If Santa Claus does not exist, how can it be true that he lives at the North Pole? Living at the North Pole is not something that a nonbeing is up to ... Still, appeals to intuition in this matter yield conflicting results."

We feel that a person who says 'Santa Claus lives at the South Pole' has gone wrong in some radical way in which the person who says that 'Santa Claus lives at the North Pole' has not. So a distinction seems overlooked in any theory which uniformly marks them both false." (7)

In what follows it is hoped that the helpful parts of Russell's initial formulation will be clarified in such a way as to remove this criticism of it.

At first sight there seems to be an interesting difference between the present King of France and Santa Claus, quite apart from these matters of residence or appearance. In the phrase 'the present King of France' is included the condition that France is known to be no longer a monarchy, so that the impossibility of the existence of the denotation is analytic. This would be clearer if one said 'The present King of the French republic' or something to that effect. This brings to light one category of non-existents: the self-contradictory ones. The impossibility of, for instance, the golden mountain, seems to be of a different sort. It is not logically impossible for a mountain to be made of gold. (8)

Such a logically impossible item, of course, is the round square. But there are a whole lot of possible designations which are not, on the face of it, self-contradictory at all.

'Unicorns are white and have a single spiral horn'. Is this true or false? 'Werewolves do not cast a shadow, and vampires do not show in the mirror'. It is significant that one can genuinely and meaningfully ask, after making this statement, 'Or is it the other way round?'

Both categories of statement have in common the fact that although we know that the item spoken of does not exist, we may yet speak of it in terms which suggest that it does.

It is perhaps significant that if one did encounter a case of genuine mistake (as when an ill-informed visitor believed that M. Mitterand was the present king of France) there would be no problem. We would simply clarify the terms and the discussion could continue without further disagreement. (N). Likewise in cases of genuine delusion: this poor fellow thinks that Mynydd Aur is made of gold.

N: See the distinction between 'discourse about fiction' and 'discourse about actuality', in Donellan's 'Speaking of Nothing' (9), where he develops 'the historical explanation theory of reference'. This says that 1. proper names are not surrogates for descriptions, but 2. their reference is derived by historical connection and in statements about non-existents a 'block' occurs in the historical chain. (p. 23).

No. it is the case in which someone talks of something which does not exist without actually believing that it does, that gives rise to apparent contradictions. Yet why should it? I suggest that in making such statements one is guilty only of ellipsis. in that there is a hidden reference to one's knowledge of the item's non-existence.

Thus when I say that I know that werewolves cast no shadow, and that vampires have to be home by dawn, can be deterred by crosses and garlic, etc., I am in effect saying that I know that is the tradition adopted by the Hammer horror films. (10) And so it would be with statements about Pegasus. (N) about centaurs, elves and unicorns, about all of which I may know a great deal without in any way claiming, or even unintentionally implying, that they exist.

N: See Routley. Richard, 'On What There Is Not' (2). He makes the simple but effective point that there is no need to attribute existence to the object of an idea, as opposed to the idea. Pegasus and the Pegasus-idea are distinct terms. "Pegasus is a horse, the Pegasus-idea is not, since ideas are not (significantly) horses." (p. 153).

Indeed, as we mentioned earlier, (11) it is an essential condition attached to any talk of griffins and centaurs that they are understood not to exist. (N)

If the identification of this ellipsis is correct, then we may perhaps have removed the distinction between things which do not exist for the reason that they are self-contradictory and things which we know from other information do not exist. A fuller statement of what is intended might yield an expansion parenthetically attached to the name and a change to a passive form of the verb: 'Centaurs (which are to be found in mythology, but not in the real world) are regarded as being part horse, part man'; or 'Santa Claus, a figure of popular imagination, is thought of as living at the North Pole'.

N: For another way of putting this see R. B. Redmon's article in Mind (12). "To say 'Pegasus does not exist' is to say that 'Pegasus' is not in a certain language." There are, he points out, cases of the opposite sort, in the form of pure descriptions, which he calls PD, "such that it would be contradictory to deny the object purportedly named by the PD had certain properties." (13) See also A. M. Honore in Philosophy, 'Reference to the Non-existent' (14) in which, among several interesting points, he sums up the conclusion as to whether existence is a predicate: it is not for assertions which presuppose the existence of the subject; but some assertions (for instance those about objects known not to exist) do not.

It is an ellipsis, purely, to say 'Centaurs are part horse, part man' and 'Santa Claus lives at the North Pole'. And if this is so, then these sentences contain as much a logical contradiction as any about 'the round square'. They are analytically false. They falsify themselves. (N)

The problem appears to arise in Russell's example when a false statement of this sort is denied. If it is false to say 'the present King of France is bald', for the reason that nothing true can be asserted of the contradictory phrase 'the present King of France', then it seems to follow that it must be true that the King of France is not bald, and therefore that something can be asserted of the designation 'the present King of France'.

N: A similar point is made by Charles Crittenden (15) in his paper 'Thinking About Non-Being', in which he concludes that there can be successful reference to characters in fiction (p. 292), the references being "to what exists-in-fiction" (p. 300). Thus the statement "Holmes smoked a pipe" is elliptical for "Someone wrote a story containing 'Holmes smoked a pipe' (or containing sentences implying this." (p. 303). "'Sherlock Holmes smoked a pipe' may look like 'Bertrand Russell smoked a pipe', but they are verified differently ..." (p. 309).

But it only seems so. and for a reason connected with the looseness of the language. (N overleaf).

It is an accident of syntax that the denial falls into the sentence in the wrong place. When we deny, for the above reasons, that the King of France is bald, we do not wish the negative to belong to the adjective ('not bald') but to the whole sentence. We would like not to have to say 'the present King of France is not bald' but rather 'Not: the present King of France is bald'. Similarly if we wished to deny that the King of France is bald at present, but admit that he was or will be, we should say: 'The present King of France not is bald': but that too would be false because any predication of 'the present King of France' is false.

It is for these two sets of syntactical reasons that the appearance arises of being able to make statements about non-existent items, and it is for these linguistic reasons that such statements do not in fact, when seen in their true light, in any way imply the existence of the items spoken of, let alone bring them, in some mysterious way, into existence.

N: See Barry Miller's "'Exists' and Existence" (16) in which he points to the loose use of 'exists' as, variously, 'are real; or 'are alive', as in the sentences 'Elephants exist, but mermaids do not' and 'Elephants exist, but dinosaurs do not'. (p. 249). However one might note that the present-tense connotations of the verb are purely accidental and arise from the inconvenience of saying 'exist-timelessly' or 'exist or existed' each time. M. Dummett (17) makes a similar point when he says: "Geach has argued that the verb 'exists' has two distinct senses: one in which it has no significant tense, and one in which it has one. According to him, it is only in the former sense that it is right to say that 'exists' is not a predicate: in this first sense, it is to be rendered by means of the existential quantifier: but, in the second sense, it is a straightforward predicate. When, for example, we say that the League of Nations no longer exists, we are genuinely making a statement about - predicating something of - the League of Nations, as opposed to the case in which we say that phlogiston does not exist."

References

- 1 Many of the works on the subject of the non-existent in the modern journal literature are referred to below. Among others which have been found to be fruitful are the following:

ROUTLEY, Richard. 'Some Things Do Not Exist'. Notre Dame School of Formal Logic, 1966. pp. 251 - 276.

WHITE, F. D. 'Searle on Existence' Philosophical Papers, 2. October 1973. pp. 89-90. The reference is to SEARLE, J. 'Speech Acts'. Cambridge University Press, 1969. For discussion of this seminal work see Appendix (III).

DEELY, John N. 'Reference to the Non-Existent'. Thomist, 39. April 1975. pp. 253-308.

DEVINE, Philip E. 'The Perfect Island, the Devil, and existent Unicorns', American Philosophical Quarterly, 12. July 1975. pp. 255-260.

ROUTLEY, Richard. 'Impossible Objects' Inquiry 19. 1976. pp. 251-3. A reply to LAMBERT (8), and below.

LAMBERT, Karel. 'On "The Durability of Impossible Objects"' Inquiry, 19. 1976. pp. 251-254.

VAN INWAGEN. Peter. 'Creatures of Fiction'. American Philosophical Quarterly. 14. October 1977. pp. 299-308. (Something is denoted by the names of fictional creatures. since they have theoretical existence in literature).

CUSMARIU. Arnold. 'Nonexistence Without Nonexistents' Philosophical Studies. 33. May. 1978. pp. 409-412. (Nonexistence is a property. but nothing exemplifies it.)

ROUTLEY. Richard. 'Exploring Meinong's Jungle and Beyond'. Research School of Social Science. Australian National University. 1979.

CAMACHO. Luis A. 'Sobre lo que Existe y lo que no Existe'. Revista de Filosofia de la Universidad de Costa Rica. 19. January to December 1981. pp. 33-38. (Camacho explores several meanings of 'exist').

JADACKI, Jacek Juliusz. 'Being and Existence: On the Being of What Seems Not To Be'. Dialectics and Humanism. 8. Fall 1981. pp. 131-139.

PRZELECKI. Marian. 'On What There Is Not' and 'There Is Nothing That Does Not Exist'. Dialectics and Humanism. 8. Fall 1981. pp. 123-129.

MILLER. Barry. 'Negative Existential Propositions'. Analysis. 42. October 1982. pp. 181-188.

- FEAGIN. Susan L. 'On Fictional Entities'.
Philosophy and Literature, 7. October 1983. pp. 240-3
 (This concerns Quine's work).
- KELLY. Charles. 'On Things That Do Not Exist And
 Never Have Existed'. Proceedings of the American
 Catholic Philosophical Association. 6. 1987. pp.
 181-190.
- 2 QUINE. Willard van Orman. 'On What There Is'.
 Chapter 1 in 'From a Logical Point of View'. Harvard
 University Press 1953. Richard Routley has co-
 incidentally chosen a similar reference to Quine as
 the title of his paper 'On What There Is Not'.
Philosophical and Phenomenological Research. 43.
 December 1982. pp. 151-178. See note to p. 155
 below.
- 3 RUSSELL. Bertrand. 'Logic and Knowledge'. Allen &
 Unwin 1956. p. 251.
- 4 Above. pp. 61 ff.
- 5 CRITTENDEN. Charles. 'Thinking About Non-Being'.
 Inquiry 16.
- 6 LINSKY, Leonard. 'Names and Descriptions'.
 University of Chicago Press 1977. p. 26.
- 7 Ibid. p. 27.
- 8 See also LAMBERT. Karel. 'Impossible Objects'.
 Inquiry 17. 1974. pp. 303-314, where he discusses
 the case of Meinong's 'round square' in the light of
 Russell's theory of descriptions.

- 9 DONELLAN, Keith S. 'Speaking of Nothing'.
Philosophical Review. 83. January 1974. pp. 3-31.
- 10 For further discussion of the reality of fictional
characters see Appendix IV. 'To Exist Or Not To
Exist' and notes and references.
- 11 Above. p. 55.
- 12 82. January 1973 p. 56.
- 13 Ibid. p. 60.
- 14 HONORE. A. M. Philosophy. 46. October 1971 pp. 302-
308.
- 15 See reference 5. above. Regarding Russell's
consideration of this point see also Crittenden's
'Ontology and the Theory of Descriptions'.
Philosophical and Phenomenological Research. 31.
1970. pp. 85-96.
- 16 MILLER. Barry. "'Exists' and Existence". The Review
of Mathematics, 40. December 1986. pp. 237-270.
Also 'Negative Existential Propositions'. Analysis.
42. October 1982. pp. 181-188.
- 17 DUMMETT, M. 'Frege, Philosophy of Language'.
Duckworth 1973. p. 386

II.4.

A Visit to the Crypto-Zoo

Whereas we know when speaking of mythical or imaginary beings, or of things which have an inbuilt contradiction, that they do not exist, there are some items spoken about of which we are genuinely not quite sure. I have in mind such items as the Loch Ness Monster and the Abominable Snowman. In this sub-section I want to ask about what would be meant if it were asserted, or denied, that such things exist.

In May 1983 a teenager in Devon saw a large black animal with white markings on its chest, otherwise similar in appearance to a lion. A lady in Inverness had seen something she described as a cat larger than a dog, in 1976. And indeed several other people had had sightings of what appeared to be the same type of creature, at various spots in Britain, during the late '70's and early '80's. (1).

The evidence was collected by an amateur zoologist, Mrs Di Francis, who published it in a book called 'Cat Country'. (2). She claimed that the creatures seen were members of a species of large cat, which had been living in Britain since the Ice Age.

Now on the one hand we have apparently evidence for something. and on the other a valid case for holding it in doubt. Here is the dilemma: if these large British cats exist. then why is this not generally known and admitted? But if they do not. what. if anything was seen?

Mrs Francis claims that they are. in effect. generally recognised since there has existed for many centuries a body of legends known jointly as tales of the Black Dog. But legends of a Black Dog are yet not counted as evidence for the existence of something. One would therefore think that Mrs Francis' body of collected first-hand experiences would now be accepted as the sort of evidence required. to support the assertion that such an animal exists. Apparently not. A senior lecturer in Biological Sciences was quoted by The Times (3) as saying that he found the evidence unconvincing. It then emerged that he had no knowledge of the evidence. not having read the book; no wonder he found it unconvincing.

The fact is that in such cases almost nothing would count as evidence. The curator of mammals at the London Zoo stated that "the only conclusive proof would be the body of one of these animals I look forward to seeing the body."

The feature-writer in The Times (4) commented that at that point there would be no need for zoology to offer its assistance, since the acquisition of a body would remove any doubts as to the creature's existence and identity. "One fears that professional zoology will thus step in at the point where it is no longer so badly needed, for Dr. Bertram, while finding the matter intriguing, is understandably too busy to search for the conclusive proof himself." She points out that if the animal exists it could be trapped any time one wanted, by means of "four baited cages around Inverness". (5).

One remarkable thing about Mrs. Francis' large cat is the fact that it is part of a world-wide menagerie the study of which has even been given a name: crypto-zoology. The subject was discussed at the Third International Congress of Systematic and Evolutionary Biology, in session at Brighton, on 7th July 1985. (6) In America their native yeti, known as Bigfoot or Sasquatch, has even achieved the status of being protected: there is a Committee Against Shooting Sasquatches. This campaign, far from providing evidence that such a creature, to be able to be saved from slaughter, must exist, in fact makes the evidence of its existence (a carcass) harder to obtain. Apart from Bigfoot and the yeti, there is also the Chinese Wildman and the Russian Alma.

It is said that some specimens of jaw and teeth have been unearthed in the case of the Wildman: but of course they might, as has often happened, turn out to be those of some other creature. Bigfoot has left a number of footprints, and plaster casts of some of these were exhibited at the conference. It would be easy to throw doubt on their authenticity, or to explain them by natural distortions. The fact is, however, that it is generally assumed that a sufficient body of evidence could, somehow, be collected to achieve the position at which the existence of any of these beings would be generally accepted. And the interesting thing about these cases is that this evidence is not forthcoming.

One might well take the view that this is not accidental. It is in the nature of Bigfoot that his existence cannot be proved. There is a crucial difference between an animal which is seen by solitary hunters and leaves large footprints in the sand, and one which can be displayed in a glass case or even perhaps in a zoo. The difference lies in the number of people able to assure themselves of its existence.

Before investigating this point in more detail, let us consider what would happen if Bigfoot or his friends were trapped and brought home.

The article reporting on the conference in The Times reminds us "that the now familiar gorilla was a controversial concept when its description was circulated in 1847". (7) and presumably some evidential breakthrough was required for a large enough body of people to be able to have confidence in its existence for it to be generally accepted as existing. (8).

Now if Bigfoot were trapped or the Loch Ness Monster were trawled up, either could then be subjected to zoological investigation. At that point it would undergo a radical change. It would be categorised as, for instance, a large species of eel, and suddenly would no longer be the Loch Ness Monster. The moment of identification by authoritative opinion is the moment at which Bigfoot ceases to be Bigfoot.

There are two questions here. 1. Would Bigfoot then exist? 2. Does Bigfoot exist now? By the first I mean that if the large biped were given a scientific name and a place in the order of nature, would we then be happy to admit that it existed: to which the answer must be Yes, but with doubts that it is still then Bigfoot. And by the second question I mean that until then some sort of significance must be attributed to the propensity to leave large footprints in the sand, which is not available, for instance, to Father Christmas. Is that sufficient basis for existence?

When one attempts to answer those questions systematically it is apparent that the matter is more complicated than might at first have been supposed. One would have to say in both cases 'It depends' It will help us understand this crucial marginal area of existence statements if we analyse now what exactly it would depend on.

Question 1. We should of course have to satisfy ourselves first as to the authenticity of the situation. Has something really been found? We would perhaps like to see it. Is the specimen found indisputably the creature which was previously the monster in question? Are the scientists who are examining it suitably qualified and unbiased? We might indeed be difficult to please on some of these questions. There is a great deal that can go wrong.

Let us assume that this obstacle-course has been negotiated, and that we have satisfied ourselves that the scientists are giving an honest description of a real discovery. It would seem to be plain that we would not (unless we were perhaps the world authority on the subject) be happy to make this step in isolation. We should want to know whether people whose opinions might be relevant accepted all this as well; and if there were a body of opinion against that position, we would perhaps have to consider both its arguments and its credentials before continuing with our decision.

Now if a majority of suitably-informed people still denied that what had been discovered was Bigfoot/Nessy, we for our part would have to have some compelling reason for overriding their view. One can imagine that taking place, as when we possessed enough information to see that they were all, however many of them, making an identifiable error. The question of how large a majority it would require to check us in our confidence and require this special circumstance is one which we should perhaps ask in a moment.

Let us for the time being say that we know that if everybody else said it was not Bigfoot, we would have to have an unusually compelling reason for disagreeing; and this would not be necessary if everybody else agreed that it was Bigfoot. We have seen, however, that mere acquiescence in a general view would not be enough to form the basis of an assertion of existence, since we would have started our investigation by assuring ourselves that something had indeed been caught.

This too is a process subject to gradations. Ideally I should like to see the item and be able to examine it. Seeing, touching etc. are paradigm conditions for belief in the existence of things which may be sensed.

Having done that I would have no doubt that the item under discussion existed. and the question of whether Bigfoot existed would then be rephrased as 'Is this Bigfoot?' If I were not able to see the thing for myself. I should need powerful and impeccable second-hand evidence. 'You can't believe everything you read in the papers'. I should believe it more readily if, for instance. I met somebody (whom I knew to be sane and truthful) who had seen it. Failing that I might rely, but with slightly less confidence, on photographs and formal reports.

Now if we take these two sets of conditions. the direct or semi-direct experience of the existence of something on the one hand. plus. on the other. the reference to informed opinion as to what that something was, then we have the elements of the mixture which makes up the answer to 'what it depends on'. in the case of Question 1, as to Bigfoot's existence. The secondary question of whether his identity would survive his discovery is, I think, of less importance. That depends on whether one wishes to make his mysteriousness and elusiveness a defining attribute of Bigfoot. or whether one regards these qualities as dispensable.

Let us call the two elements P and Q. P = the evidence from observation. Q = the opinion of suitable other people.

Answering 'Does Bigfoot exist?' requires an interplay between these two. P on its own would provide that something exists. but there would be no need to say it was Bigfoot. Q on its own would say that if that something exists. then it is Bigfoot, but would give no guarantee that it did exist.

Before considering other examples. let us deal briefly in the same manner with Question 2.

No carcase has been found. no specimen trapped. Yet sightings are still reported and visible evidence claimed. It is possible at one extreme that what is seen is an illusion. and that the supposed evidence is classed as such under the distorted view of wishful thinking. One might say. as no doubt Jungians indeed do. that all this monster-sighting is evidence for a manifestation of the collective unconscious. In that case Bigfoot exists, but only as an image in our cultural and psychological makeup. The footprints are not made by a biped. but by a whirlwind or the condensation and evaporation of pools of dew. Since it is the essence of Bigfoot that he is real enough to make footprints himself. rather than have them thus made for him. then I think at that extreme we would want to say that he does not exist. 'The delusion of Bigfoot exists' is not the sort of assertion we were after.

This situation, however, would have to be proved, and it is notoriously difficult to eliminate a possibility. That, indeed, is how these creatures manage to survive, in an otherwise inhospitable ontological climate. One imagines the Jungians getting up from their meeting only to catch a glimpse of a large humanoid ape slipping away among the trees. If one tried to remain agnostic, the Save the Sasquatch Society would demand that the sightings be either faulted or explained. Yet to say on this basis that Bigfoot exists because something has been seen and makes footprints in the sand is to embark on an exercise in terminology. What is being said is that 'Bigfoot' is the description of the cause, at present quite unknown, of these phenomena. It is not to posit in any way the existence of a humanoid ape, or whatever. In passing, it is worth laying emphasis on this last point. 'Bigfoot' is then the term given to an unknown cause.

Now if I saw Bigfoot myself, while hunting in the Rockies, the matter might seem to be resolved. This would not, however, be the case if I had never heard that anybody else had seen him. I could quite credibly put the experience down to the effects of the strength of the sunshine, or indeed the moonshine. I can imagine myself becoming convinced that I had been deluded, in the face of the lack of corroborative views.

If on the other hand I was in the Rockies and among Bigfoot supporters. but failed myself to see him. it would similarly be open to me to hold them all deluded: though the number and sobriety of the people in question might make this position increasingly difficult to uphold.

But if I saw Bigfoot myself (or was convinced that that had happened) and knew of many upright and serious people who solemnly said that they had done so also. then of course the conditions would then obtain under which I could assert that Bigfoot existed. In other words, we are back to a suitable combination of P and Q. (N).

Note that the balance between the two appears to be important. Neither P nor Q on its own is sufficient. Intuitively one feels that a lot of P may perhaps be adequately supported by a little Q, and a lot of Q by a little P: but the ideal would appear, at a rough assessment, to be an equal quantity of both.

N: Above. p (195) P = the evidence from observation; Q = the opinion of suitable other people.

Let us now try out this conclusion against other examples. I do not, personally, believe that flying saucers exist. and by this I mean that I hold that whatever people may think they see on the occasions when they claim to have seen flying saucers they have not seen craft from outer space visiting the earth. On the above analysis we would have to ask first 'Do they see anything?'. and second 'If they do, how would that something qualify as a flying saucer?'

I might, for instance, simply disbelieve them. I could put it down to attention-seeking or to an over-indulged imagination. Or I might believe that they thought they saw something, and put it down to delusion. If they convinced me that they had indeed seen something (we may leave aside for the moment how this might be done) I turn to the second question, and ask whether the phenomenon could be identified. There is a subsidiary terminological question which asks whether a fireball or an experimental plane is, for the time being, a flying saucer, until its real identity becomes known. The corollary would be whether a flying saucer becomes a meteor etc., and ceases to be a flying saucer, when thus identified.

The process of convincing me of the existence of flying saucers would thus be twofold. First, if I saw one myself I would then believe that people making such claims saw something. I would of course not make this decision lightly. I would have to satisfy myself that it was not a trick of the light or a fault of eyesight. But let us suppose that the object was as plain and undeniable as it is often supposed to be. I then move on to ask whether this something is a flying saucer in the sense that its provenance is extra-terrestrial.

What would it take to convince me that this thing was a flying saucer, in that sense? We are now in the Q section of the process, having hypothetically disposed of the P one. Now I think my reaction to this situation would be very much conditioned by the context of the event. On the one hand, one might be living in a society which believed wholeheartedly and unquestioningly in the existence of flying saucers. In that environment I would have previously been a heretic, and there would be a latent predisposition to change my mind. It is, I suppose, from experience, rather than just for convenience, that one recognises that if one disagrees with everybody else one may be wrong. At the other extreme, in which nobody else believed in the existence of flying saucers, the opposite pressure would obtain, and I should therefore be more inclined to maintain my scepticism.

It would, probably, require at least one authoritative voice to counter the general trend before I could confidently make my new assertion.

As it happens (to continue this investigation of real situations) we do in fact live in a context lying somewhere between these extremes. Many books have been written seeking to prove the existence of flying saucers and to explain their appearances. These are apparently supported with detailed evidence. Photographs have been taken. Even the requirement of official recognition is in the offing. The matter was at one time raised in the House of Lords, and an official investigation is being carried out by NASA.

On the other hand the vast majority of people have no direct experience of flying saucers, and know nobody who has, and so lack the primary (P) ingredient for believing in their existence. I could thus count on a measure of support either way.

Suppose the balance were to be tilted, gradually. More and more people saw flying saucers. More and more authoritative institutions took the matter up. It became reported as factual on television. Appearances were filmed in circumstances which precluded fake. At a certain point in the tilt of this balance my Q factor would pass its critical point, provided always that my P factor was not null.

But say that even at this point I had had no experience of the phenomena myself. nor knew anyone who had. I could of course satisfy the P factor from the evidence collected in the Q analysis. the general and growing opinion that what was being experienced was in fact flying saucers. I think that unless and until I had good first-hand or at second-best second-hand experience of the phenomena being dealt with I would still entertain residual scepticism.

In these circumstances it would of course become increasingly eccentric to do so. But equivalently it would become increasingly unlikely that I should continue to lack the P factor; and no doubt the two conditions are related.

To be the only person holding or resisting a particular belief is to be accounted mad. That situation, however, is susceptible to change. Let us consider Copernicus. On the face of it it is obvious and indisputable that the sun goes round the earth. Everybody can satisfy themselves of this fact by simple observation. There would appear to be no need to investigate further. One sympathises with the Pisan philosopher Libri who refused to look through Galileo's telescope on the ground that what Galileo claimed it showed was impossible.

How much evidence did it take to convince people of the real nature of the solar system? One cannot for oneself, even now, demonstrate that the apparent movement of the sun is an illusion, caused by the turning of the earth.

One can, of course, and this is crucial, see how this could well be the case, once it is pointed out. The evidence of science is more likely to convince scientists, and that presumably was what took place. The scientists would then use their authority to convince the rest.

In other words, there is a lot of the qualifying (Q) factor in such cases, the phase of the process in which it is decided that what is being experienced is best described as such-and-such. If so with Copernicus, how much more with quantum physics and modern astronomy. None of us are equipped with our own electron-microscope or radio-telescope, nor would we know what to make of the data revealed if we were lent one. That we do nevertheless accept the findings of science on these matters illustrates the extent to which we are prepared to go along with the general agreement, provided it is relayed to us from the fountainhead of expertness.

We have, with these examples, reached the boundary of consent about existence. Let us note here that we cannot feel quite happy about the meaning of existence at this extreme. If no ordinary person can experience, either directly or at second-hand, a nuclear particle, then it would seem to demand a particularly trusting acceptance of expert opinion to feel confident that they exist. The P factor is entirely missing.

Is it for this reason that we do not feel in our guts that they are saying something meaningful when they claim that such things exist? Perhaps we feel that it is a convenient way of expressing something else. and that the assumption of the existence of the nuclear particle is an expression of a certain view of events. rather like those expressions implying the existence of angels. We have enough respect for these people to feel sure that they have their own reasons for arguing about how many positrons may be located on a pinhead.

Interim conclusions

We have now reached a point at which we may draw some conclusions from these considerations.

Both experience and convention are necessary determinants of existence; neither are sufficient. Two main points here may lead towards an ultimate conclusion:

1. That assertions of existence are not solely determined by experience.
2. That assertions of existence are not solely determined by convention.

The question which will have to be settled in the end is the means and relative strengths of the combination.

Priority. balance. ratio. predominance. method of interaction: these are matters which need to be further considered. To talk and behave as if something exists amounts to finding it expedient in terms of experience to hold that view. plus sharing an agreement on the subject with others. We may note in the meantime that any position which holds that only the evidence of experience is relevant. a view which might be termed pure positivism is ruled out. as being too extreme, by these conclusions; as is also its counterpart. in a pure form the doctrine that all statements of existence are completely convention-based.

To summarise further:

1. To have the experience but lack the consent is possibly to suffer from delusions. Nothing is brought into existence that way. Note that it does not matter how real the experiences are. We can happily accept that the experiences are real but that the pink elephants are not.
2. But what about the other way round: to have the consent not in fact backed up by experience? When people believed in witches, demons, or Olympian gods, we would say that there were in fact no witches, demons, or Olympian gods for them to experience. Yet it seems as if the consensus on the subject can override that difficulty. It can be agreed that certain experiences shall count as experiences of witches, demons, gods.

Is that not in the end, however, what always happens - although we do not always say so, because we do not need to, at the time? Certain experiences count as being experiences of chairs, tables, dogs and cats. Thus even in the case of witches and gods there is an element of experience involved. This point illustrates how closely intertwined and mutually reliant are the elements of experience and convention.

The question would seem to be: 1. how much consent, and 2. how much experience - or what degree, or what quality of both - is needed?

How many people does it take to make something exist by agreeing that it does? Evidently not a majority, at least for the purposes of theology. But would we not need an overwhelming, almost inclusive majority, to convince us of the existence of certain things - to make us believe, in the absence of experience, in the existence of ghosts, or flying saucers?

Experience would certainly speed things up, and in fact most of the agreeing might be dispensable, except for that small amount which acts as a prophylactic against charges of delusion. But how much agreement is that? Can it be quantified?

We have seen that in real life I would believe in flying saucers (a) if I saw one. and one or two other trustworthy people convinced me that they saw it too, or (b) if almost everybody else believed in them. and I had some sort of experience which conformed to this view. To behave otherwise in such circumstances is to adopt the occult: to make a claim to special and exclusive knowledge without however recognising the need to justify that claim.

It is tempting to conclude that we live in an ontological democracy. The orthodoxy of existence is a matter of votes.

References

1. The Times. Wednesday 15th February, 1984.
2. David & Charles. 1983.
3. Loc.cit.
4. Merry Harpur.
5. Loc.cit.
6. The Times. Monday 8th July, 1985.
7. Loc.cit.
8. See Appendix V, 'The Spirits of the Yellow Leaves'. for a contemporary case.

We said in the previous sub-section that in certain cases of doubt as to something's existence 'almost nothing would count as evidence'. (1) In this sub-section we shall consider a means of systematizing this form of guarantee.

It was Arthur Koestler who drew attention to the type of thinking which he called 'closed systems'. If you argue with a Freudian. he pointed out, he would bring Freudian terms to bear to refute you. by claiming your disagreement itself as a demonstration of his case. " ... you were caught in a vicious circle. Similarly, if you argue with a Stalinist that to make a pact with Hitler was not a nice thing to do. he would explain that your bourgeois class-consciousness made you unable to understand the dialectics of history." Disagreeing with a paranoiac. he continues. renders you part of his evidence: " ... he will at once accuse you of being a member of the world conspiracy to suppress truth." (2).

When Einstein made his famous pronouncement 'if the facts do not fit the theory. then the facts are wrong' he spoke with his tongue in his cheek: but he nevertheless expressed a profound feeling of the scientist committed to his theory. (3).

A closed system, he says, is "a system which cannot be refuted by evidence" since it converts data and criticism into its own terms. (4)

It is perhaps significant that Koestler chooses the Freudian system as the first of his examples, since the self-proving nature of Freud's theories is one of their most noticeable characteristics. In his book 'The Interpretation of Dreams', for instance, Freud proposes a grand and overall theory to which he attaches just that sort of commitment referred to, namely the theory that all dreams are cases of wish-fulfilment. He was so impressed by the importance of this theory that he envisaged "that some day a marble tablet will be placed on the house" inscribed with the words "In This House, on July 24th, 1895 the Secret of Dreams was Revealed to Dr. Sigm. Freud". (5)

What then does he do when a dream is reluctant to conform to his requirements? There are some which he comes across which are at first sight blatantly not fulfilment of wishes. These, however, he interprets as disguised or suppressed wish-fulfilment, in which, for instance, something is made to stand for its opposite. Anxiety dreams, for instance, seem to "make it impossible to assert as a general proposition ... that dreams are wish-fulfilments: indeed they seem to stamp any such proposition as an absurdity."

Yet there is a way round this difficulty: the theory is not concerned with the apparent quality, but with the interpretation behind it. "We must make a contrast between the manifest and the latent content of dreams." (6) Critics of this blatant casuistry are peremptorily dismissed. "It is hard to credit the obstinacy with which readers and critics of this book shut their eyes to this consideration and overlook the fundamental distinction between the manifest and the latent content of dreams." (7)

Once having decided that his theory was universal in its applicability, Freud was committed to deciphering in its terms even the most intransigent case. This extreme he eventually found himself obliged to confront. A woman patient dreamt that she was to take a holiday in circumstances she particularly wished to avoid. Freud had, the day before, explained to her that all dreams are fulfilments of wishes, and when she brought this specimen to his consulting rooms the next morning he was at first dismayed. " ... was not this the sharpest possible contradiction of my theory that in dreams wishes are fulfilled?" (8)

His solution is masterly, and shows us how a closed system (if such this is) could turn out to be infallible. The woman patient disliked the trend of his advice, and wanted to prove him wrong.

She thus fulfilled this wish by producing a dream which contradicted his theory: and by doing so she demonstrated it. "the dream showed that I was wrong. Thus it was her wish that I might be wrong. and her dream showed that wish fulfilled." (9)

If one has the strong sense at this point that the critic cannot win. this is due to the method of closed systems. They deprive you of your weapons. Nothing will count as evidence against the theory. If it appears to be such, it can be adapted.

Let us now consider what is perhaps the paradigm case of a closed system.

"There was a man in the land of Uz. whose name was Job." It is put into the mind of God by Satan that Job's uprightness and fear of God are due to his fortunate circumstances. To test this hypothesis (and, as God knows, prove it wrong) Satan is permitted to deprive him of these. At their next meeting God observes to Satan that the removal of his material fortune has not corrupted Job's uprightness, and a further assault, against Job's physical state itself, is agreed on.

Job's consequent misfortunes cannot be attributed to the punishment of wickedness, since he is without sin. Indeed (as we know) it is rather the other way round. His uprightness itself is the cause of his misfortune. It is this fact which makes it seem inevitable that he will accuse God of injustice; and to do so would of course be sinful.

Indeed the Biblical story implies that God is using the ultimate resource of being intentionally unjust, in order to carry out this test: and no doubt we are to see in this an expression of the 'problem of evil', in the sort of extreme form which must have taxed the piety of the Jews in the concentration camps.

It is clear to other participants in the story that since God is just and Job is suffering, then it follows that Job must have sinned. (10). For Job to admit this conclusion would be, in their eyes, his correct response. (11). But Job knows that he has not sinned, as of course does God, and as do we, the readers. (12). He is thus in an unenviable dilemma, and much of the book is devoted to displaying this. If he denies his sinfulness he implies God's injustice. (13). (Indeed this is the course he chooses, and the solution in the end provided by God is, as we shall see, to sever the line of reasoning giving that implication).

To do that would be the only sin of his life. and he will not willingly approach it until brought to this by the taunting of his companions.

This sort of constriction is evidently one of the perils of the closed system. and it adds a dimension of moral destruction to Job's already physically beleaguered state. Faced with this final predicament, what does Job do? It is particularly interesting (as indeed it was in the case of Freud) to see a problem which arises directly from the closed nature of a closed system being worked out in practice.

What does Job do? He maintains as far as possible the consistency of his argument. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him". (14). "How many are mine iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin." (15) "My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me." (16)

To summarise before proceeding: If Job does not accuse God of injustice. it is because he has defined God as invariably just, and therefore there can be no data which would count as evidence for God's injustice - and this. we see. is so even when God is intentionally 'unjust'.

The case of Job helps us to see that closed systems rest on a logical basis: if God is defined as being (among other things) invariably just, then 'God's injustice' is a self-contradiction, and therefore impossible. Indeed the story, after much moral complexity, shows God's ultimate justice, and (as we shall see) by doing so indicates the illusory nature of his apparent injustice.

In the meantime, Job has not sinned, nor will he (17). "So the three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes." (18). It requires intervention from another observer to clarify the position. The answer is that God is not morally accountable: it is wrong to infer from the fact that Job is just the conclusion that God is not, because the same criteria do not apply. Indeed it remains impossible for God to be unjust. (19). To suggest such is an inappropriate form of speech. (20). It is therefore logic which has to be adapted: not the governing premises, but the link between them. Job was thus wrong to think that his righteousness was in any way a reply to God's will. (21). "Behold, God is great, and we know him not ... " (22).

When God himself, who has been listening to the debate, finally intervenes, it is to emphasise the non-comparability of the cases, due to their different scales. (23).

It is as if to say that what is within the universe cannot be used as part of a statement about the totality of the universe. We have seen the point made before, for instance in the case of Russell's distinction between first-order and second-order propositions, and Carnap's point (24) about the inappropriateness of asking questions based on a framework, about matters (such as the reality of the totality) external to that framework. Similarly Wittgenstein in the Tractatus distinguishes between what is in the world and what is beyond it. "Whereof one cannot speak," God might have said. "thereof one must be silent." So Job indeed replied to God: "What shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.". (25)

At the end, however, God proves himself just in human terms, in that he restored the righteous Job's good fortune, and "blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning." (26) This further refinement adds a route by which a theory may be sustained even in the face of a breakdown of the internal mechanism. If the evidence remains intractable - evidence for the absence of God's justice, for instance, being such that it cannot be adapted to become evidence of God's justice - still the desired outcome may be only postponed, not yet disproved - God may in due course prove to be, as the definition demands, ultimately just, perhaps in terms of a longer time-span than the one at present under consideration. Indeed the time-span available in this case is infinite.

This leads to the possibility of delaying the conclusion. by positing a further piece of information not yet discovered.

Not only religion but science itself may operate in closed-system terms by proposing such a future - sine die. perhaps. And it is with this consideration that we come to the relevance of closed systems to questions of existence.

The cases of Freud and Job are of course quite different. In the first the theory was such that evidence could always be adapted to conform to it. In the case of Job we have plainly intractable evidence producing a logical paradox based on a matter of definition. which has to be resolved largely by logical means. They do however share some elements. and it is these which we may find instructive. Further investigation of the structure of closed systems will reveal these.

From what we have seen so far it becomes clear that there are in fact two sorts of closed systems. We may term them the inclusive and the exclusive. The first guarantees the existence of the items they are proposing; nothing will count as evidence that God is not just. or that dreams are not wish-fulfilment. The second guarantees the non-existence of non-members of the system. If biological science does not include in its categories a dog-sized cat. or a man-like ape. then it can countenance no evidence for the existence of these.

It is, then, apparently possible to make things exist or not exist by a purely internal mechanism; by so constructing the terminology. Two things are striking about this: 1. That we want to say that this is somehow cheating, that it does not seem satisfactory; 2. That we want to say that this was not what we meant by existing, or not existing. Perhaps what we learn by this is that existence must have a dependence on something outside terminology.

If in fact the semantic philosophers (as discussed in Section I, sub-section 5) had been able to sustain a consistent case for a convention-based view of existence, then closed systems would have been the norm rather than the apparent oddity they are. But if the system is so constructed that no evidence, no experience would make any difference, then the proposition is in effect null, since for all the difference it makes it might just as well have not been made. What is it to say that God is merciful if even God himself is unable to disprove this? Is it not to rid the word 'merciful' of all meaning?

We are now in a position to identify what is wrong with closed systems: it is that they make an implicit claim to be doing something which they do not do. While appearing to be saying something about a state of affairs in the outside world, they are in fact only informative about the internal workings of their own structures. Our dissatisfaction at this deception is closely related to something we have previously discovered: that matters of existence cannot be analysed purely in terms of semantics or dealt with as features peculiar to a language system, but must, to be meaningful, bear some relation to experience.

References

1. Above. p. 189.
2. KOESTLER. A. 'The Ghost in the Machine'. Picador 1967. p. 264.
3. Loc.cit.
4. Op.cit. p. 263.
5. FREUD. S. Letter of June 12th. 1900: Freud. 'The Origins of Psychoanalysis'. London and New York 1954. Letter 137; quoted in 'The Interpretation of Dreams'. Penguin Books 1978. p. 199.
6. Ibid. p. 215.
7. Ibid. note p. 215.
8. Op.cit. p. 234.
9. Loc.cit.
10. Job 4: 7-8. 8: 5. 20. 22: 5ff.
11. Job 11: 4, 13ff. 22: 21ff.
12. Job 10: 7, 15. 23: 11, 12.
13. Job 16: 5. 6.

(references cont.)

14. Job 13: 15.
15. Job 13: 23.
16. Job 27: 4. 5.
17. Job 31.
18. Job 31: 1.
19. Job 34: 10. 12.
20. Job 34: 18. 19.
21. Job 35: 2.
22. Job 36: 26.
23. Job 38, 39, 40, 41.
24. Above, p. 83.
25. Job 40: 4.
26. Job 42: 12.

In accordance with the progression of this section, from the abstract towards the concrete, we move now to a consideration of what we may suppose to be the most definite examples of things being thought of as existing, the case of physical objects.

When we say we are sure of the existence of certain things we are implicitly making a contrast with others for which we are not so sure of that. Thus we may contrast chairs and tables with flying saucers and ghosts; or with things we know do not exist, werewolfs, unicorns, centaurs; or, in another category, with the present King of France and the round square. As a means of setting some standard, we would contrast chairs and tables further with such matters as universals and numbers. We contrast the 'physical object world', in fact, with all the types of items we have so far been considering in Section II.

It is noteworthy that if there had not been some sort of problem with the existence of all these other cases we might not have wanted to refer to the existence of physical objects at all. But that would then have been because we would not have needed to. The fish, one may presume, does not remark on the water - at least until deprived of it. This is implicitly to assert that we do live in the physical object world - a point that would hardly be queried by the non-philosopher.

From our point of view the interesting point is that the question of the existence of physical objects has in fact possible applications. beyond these cases of comparison in which it stands as a paradigm. It occurs again. in its own right as it were. when there are cases of doubt.

The discussion in this sub-section is directed towards a consideration of what we mean. what effect or difference we intend. when we say that physical objects exist. We will in due course consider how one might come to say this. but for the time being we may consider what implications would be present if we did so.

In the matter of contrast referred to above we could refer to their empirical effects, saying for instance that we can sit on them and use them for writing on in a way we cannot sit on or write on numbers or universals. We can say that we can call them in evidence on their own behalf in a way we cannot with centaurs and unicorns. Further. we may say that they will not betray us by internal inconsistency, as would the round square and the king of France. (Interestingly the contrast is less clear in the case of the yeti and flying saucers). In other words (and hardly surprisingly) they have a head start by the very fact of being physical objects. when we are talking in empirical terms.

It is when an internal problem crops up, and such easy certainties desert us, that they lose this prerogative. If, in Cartesian terms, we may doubt everything, we may doubt them in just the same way as everything else. If, then, one asserts (and not for the purpose of comparison) that physical objects exist, or alternatively that a certain physical object exists, it would have to be against some sort of background of scepticism.

Descartes considered the hypothetical position in which everything is an illusion. Leaving aside the question of the coherence of universal illusion, let us keep our grip on this table. If everything is an illusion, then this is an illusion. But I happen to know, as a matter of fact, what that would be like. We move now from the general to the particular case of illusion. If this table were an example of an extremely successful hologram, a three-dimensional image created by interplaying beams of light, then I should not be able to put my glass down on it. It would fall to the floor and break. Descartes would reply that the glass as well (and he and I, presumably, and therefore this discussion) would be equally illusory. But since putting an illusory glass down on an illusory table must be exactly the same, in itself, as putting a real glass down on a real table, we can safely return to the specific case: if the table, on its own, might be a

conjuring trick or some other misunderstanding, on my part, of my sensory impressions, what would I mean if I asserted, or denied, that it existed?

On this level I would mean such things as that I could safely put my glass down on it. It would not fall to the floor and break, as it would (and an illusory glass no doubt would not) if the table were in fact a construction of laser beams. I would mean also that I could expect it to behave in a way I associate with the things I call physical objects: to display a degree of permanance and consistency, for instance, so that it will not, while I am sitting here, come and go, change its shape or size, or (for instance) start singing. (N) (There are indeed items on the borders of the category I recognise as physical objects, such as steam or various gases, which do not display the degree of fixity and immutability required; and this is precisely why they are borderline cases). (1)

N: In Chapter III ('The Environmental Field') of his 'Principles of Gestalt Psychology' K. Koffka (1) identifies the distinction between 'Things and Not-things'. "Are clouds things? If yes, is fog, air, light, cold?" he asks (p.70). He then considers words, noises, waves, motions and forces. (p.71). He concludes: "Thus we may single out three characteristics of things which will severally and jointly be constitutive of things: shaped boundedness, dynamic properties, and constancy." (p.72).

In other words. when I say it exists. I am bringing into play quite a lot of information as to what I expect of tables. information dependent on quite a lot of experience of things which I call tables.

This is in fact what I mean by 'table'. and one that conforms to these diverse and rather strict requirements is what I mean by 'one that exists'.

Assuming we have found out how to sort out the question of whether anyone is playing a trick on me or whether I am for some other reason. such as having faulty eyesight. mistaken. there is still a general point which, however we may attempt to defer it. must be faced. 'This table exists' might be said in the context of a discussion about micro-physics. Let us consider how one might actually come to say this. as part of the following line of discussion. The electron is an electrical charge: it is thus non-material, in the sense of having no substance: as a physical object in the normal sense, of being visible and tangible. it does not exist. Yet this table is inevitably composed of electrons. And 'this table exists'. How to explain that paradox?

Alternatively, again on the general level. there is the argument related to idealism: to put it crudely. as a non-neurologist. all our perceptions of the world are derived from our sense-impressions as interpreted by the brain.

What exists for us, is therefore a series of refractions of light giving rise to neural charges. How does that leave this table? Does it, or only its impression, exist? And so on.

Now what is striking about these rather hackneyed points is that we have, without as it were moving from our seats, identified several quite different senses in which physical objects may be said to exist or not exist. Do these different senses imply different demands in terms of qualifying conditions? To answer this we must consider how one would in fact set about deciding on the existence of a table.

I think I should always be concerned about whether I could safely put my glass down on it. This is not just the result of a natural caution, but of a feeling that if such questions could not be asked we would not be talking about a table at all, real or imaginary. Can you put your glass down on a bundle of electrons? There is about that question, I feel, and the related one about sense-impressions and neural charges, a misleading quality which relates it to the Cartesian condition of total delusion. It implies that only the table is insubstantial, not the glass. You can of course (as we have remarked) put an illusory glass down quite safely on an illusory table. There would not be a lot of point in doing so, but if the risk of breakage were one's main worry I can think of no safer course.

Yet if one pursued the illusion to the contents - say an illusory little St. Estèphe ('lacks body'?) - and finally to the illusion of intoxication, of next morning's headache, and all other matters which could otherwise distinguish the illusory from the non-illusory, then the effect would have been lost: it would still have been just like putting a real glass down on a real table.

We must note that it is only when the two conditions are mixed - real glass/illusory table - that danger occurs. And there is a lesson to be learnt from this. In any meaningful case I would be asking not 'is the world an illusion' but: 'is this table?'

To conclude, it seems that one cannot find an appropriate use for discussion of the existence of physical objects which does not have practical consequences. To ask whether the glass, the table, and their contexts are an illusion invites the comment that it would make no difference: and so it is not worth asking about. It is, however worth asking the question about the table if one knows, or assumes, the real existence of the glass. In such a case the answer would actually make a difference, and so the question might really and usefully be asked. Once again it is the element of informativeness, in the way of the answer's making some sort of difference, that makes it reasonable to talk about existence.

References

- 1 KOFFKA. K. 'Principles of Gestalt Psychology' New York. Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1935.

Introduction

In the first Section of this thesis we set the background for an investigation of statements about existence by giving examples of the way the subject had been treated in past philosophy, and we found that a group of residual problems, broadly speaking to do with the relation of existence statements to convention on the one hand and to experience on the other, remained sufficiently persistent to be worthy of further discussion. To be precise, we found that while Plato had produced what appeared to be a general rule to decide on questions of existence, it was of no use in certain cases because it implicitly relied on the part played by an observer; and we illustrated this point further in relation to the work of Berkeley. We then found that certain distinctions arising from the writings of Anselm, and some apparent misunderstandings of these, highlighted the lack of an agreed formula for deciding questions of existence, in spite of the fact that Plato appeared to have provided one. Bertrand Russell's apparent removal of any problems in this sphere turned out, on investigation, to be little more than a restatement of the problems; and the work of philosophers of the semantic school left undecided the degree to which experience, as well as language, governs decisions on questions of existence.

In the second Section we gave examples in a systematic form of the way existence statements come to be made, and the sort of procedures which are adopted to deal with cases of dispute, with the aim of considering what is intended when existence claims are made or denied and in the hopes that this, in turn, would shed further light on the roles of convention and experience in relation to such statements. Broadly speaking these first two Sections constituted types of review, firstly of what has been said and secondly of what is done. We now turn to a slightly different sort of exercise.

While the previous Sections looked outwards, at the sayings and doings of others, Section three has more of an inward-looking aspect, regarding as it does the subject of this thesis itself. In fact it largely sets out to clarify two of the terms which occur in the thesis's title. In the process these will be defined, at least for present purposes.

As a means of approaching this subject it is intended to use the distinction between quantity and quality expressed by Peter Winch in his book 'The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy'. (1) This, and the relation of quantification to quality, Winch derives from H. B. Acton (2) and ultimately from Hegel. It is intended to show that the distinction is not as clear as Winch supposes, and in doing so to identify the boundaries of convention and experience.

Having reached this present point we have inevitably established certain views and standpoints, and it might be as well to note these now.

When this thesis tries to sort out what is going on when people use the word 'exist', the intention is not (as has been frequently said) to answer the questions of their disputes, but rather to help them to ask those questions clearly. Perhaps in the process some of the more untidy questions will simply disappear, that in itself being a sort of answer. If that should happen we have done some good.

In this process there arises a recurrent theme, an idea which has been increasingly forcing itself upon us, namely that saying something which there is no point in saying is best avoided. That is, if the situation in which one has made the claim 'p' is indistinguishable, in every way other than the fact of the utterance of 'p', from the situation in which 'p' is not asserted, then it seems to me that 'p' is wrong. It pretends to something which it cannot sustain, such as the transfer of information, since no statement would surely pretend to vacuity.

If nothing is achieved then it would have been better to have said nothing. The valid use of a term or a proposition may be judged by results.

Convention

Citing Hegel's 'Law of the Transformation of Quality', under the heading 'Differences in Degree and differences in Kind', Peter Winch (3) says "the concepts which we apply to the more complex behaviour are logically different from those we apply to the less complex." As an example of the failure "to distinguish physical changes from conceptual changes" he mentions "the sudden qualitative change of water into ice following on a series of uniform quantitative changes of temperature" and the question of how many grains of wheat one has to add together before one has a heap. (4)

This cannot be settled by experiment because the criteria by which we distinguish a heap from a non-heap are vague in comparison with those by which we distinguish water from ice; there is no sharp dividing line. (see Note overleaf)

A similar point is made by Richard Routley (5), who gives such questions as "How wide is Mt. Egmont? Where do its slopes end? ... Is this a new wave? How many mountain peaks are in a range?" and adds "Questions as to precise boundaries, in particular, are very common with natural entities: these are sometimes settled by decision or convention, and sometimes not." (6) Human artefacts on the other hand "do have sharp boundaries" and so are taken as paradigms of entities. (7)

N:

Acton (2) cites Hegel as follows: "(8) In the note to 108 of the Encyclopedia Hegel also refers to puzzles about the number of grains it takes to make a heap, and the number of hairs that have to be plucked from a horse's tail to make it a bald-tailed horse." (Acton, op.cit. p.82-3). He differentiates these cases from that of water freezing, also used by Hegel: "in the second case there is a marked observable difference; first there is liquid, then there is solid. In the first case, however, there is no such marked transition, since there is an element of choice about whether we call a set of grains a heap or not." (ibid. p.92). Acton is concerned to expose the fallacy of the Communist belief in sudden leaps of change, such as revolution, and in predictability. (p.89). However perhaps we should note that there is some analogy between water freezing and grains becoming a heap. Acton points this out, though Winch appears to ignore it. The look of the grains changes, like that of the water, when "after a while, we see them as a whole." (Acton, p.93) But, when, we may ask, is that? 'After a while' invites a whole host of questions. Acton continues: "Psychologists give the name 'form quality' to the 'look' that wholes have as distinct from the separate appearance of each of their parts." (loc.cit). This is perhaps not the place to inquire whether psychologists have devised a means of measuring when 'form quality' comes into being.

Winch likewise is arguing that there are some concepts not susceptible to quantification because not sufficiently specific. (We may note that this distinction itself might be one such, because it would be hard to say at what degree of specificness a concept would become quantifiable.) I have argued elsewhere that it is in the nature of some concepts that they are of a qualitative rather than a quantitative nature, and that therefore no degree of refinement would enable them to be quantified: "In order to decide at what point something becomes 'acceptable', do you measure the little units of acceptability in it? Does it cease to be acceptable at some point when these units are removed from it one by one, and if so at what exact point does this change take place? The idea is absurd. It is absurd because that is not the way the word 'acceptable' is used". (8) I went on to distinguish quantity and quality by virtue of the contextual relation of the latter. "Quantity is what it is regardless of the context in which it exists. A change from one qualitative nature to another involves the making of a decision, and this is made by the rules appropriate to the circumstances prevailing." (9)

I now think that this distinction is itself flawed, in that all apparent quantification has an innate qualitative element. Winch says that the number of degrees one needs to "reduce the temperature of a bucket of water for it to freeze ... has to be settled experimentally". (10)

But can it be settled experimentally what a degree is? How large? How is it to be measured? By what criteria do we distinguish a degree from a non-degree? This is clearly a conceptual matter, in Winch's terms. It is not, to use his quotation from Acton, a matter "that the facts press upon us in unmistakable fashion". (11)

If it were the case that the number of degrees by which one has to reduce the temperature of a bucket of water for it to freeze "has to be settled experimentally" then that would be knowledge which one could gain purely by means of experience. That however assumes that it has already been settled what a degree is, and this is not something given to us by nature but rather a matter on which we have to make a conceptual decision. Since this must be the case for all units of measurement it means that quantification cannot have experimental identity in independence of, and distinction to, the alternative decision or convention-based qualitative world. One might try to imagine a process of the simple addition of specific units until a new form is reached: say we go on adding soldiers until we find we have a platoon. Leaving aside the question of whether what is and what is not a soldier has been reached by agreement rather than observed, it is obvious that we could not do this without prior agreement as to how many soldiers constitute a platoon. There has of course been no discovery at all; and so it will be with all cases of change produced by addition.

These are in fact two simple rules which will hold in all cases, and they may thus be put into general form.

A: Items identified by the application of measurement must ipso facto be convention-based.

B: Items identified by the addition of given units are convention-based through dependence on prior agreement.

In A the case holds in general because units of measurement are part of the cultural activity of measuring, rather than given by nature. In B the case holds in general because the units, although in this case given, cannot of themselves delimit a concept other than themselves. They lack this capacity because they are, as stated, given as units.

It might be debated, for instance, whether pennies have within them the capacity to combine to become pounds. If they do, then the event of 100 pennies being £1 is part of the conceptual background of their occurrence, and not something which takes place as a result of the accumulation of pennies. In this case the pennies are not just simple units, but also one-hundredths of a pound, so that the matter is analytic. If however the pennies do not have within them the capacity to combine to become pounds then the event of 100 pennies becoming £1 must be something we provide from outside the given data. The pennies could not in this case provide the information for us.

A heap, in Winch's example, is something of a different order to a number of grains of wheat. Thus no number of grains of wheat can form a heap. This is because, as we shall see shortly, it is we who form heaps, not wheat. My point here however is that when water undergoes an undoubted conceptual as well as physical change on becoming ice, the quantification of this issue also resides in us rather than the water, which is not, in itself, getting colder in quantified terms. This is not through any elusiveness on its part or incompetence on ours, but simply because quantification is a human and not an aqueous activity.

It might be objected that we could not form a heap of grains of wheat without grains of wheat: so that the formation of heaps cannot be just a matter of agreement. This is perfectly acceptable, but it can also be shown that the formation of heaps is not just a matter of the addition of grains. For one thing it depends also on the prior knowledge of the concept 'heap'. Without that you would not know that what you had was a heap. Grain cannot supply that information. Grain cannot decide what is a heap. A heap is a concept. Human beings form concepts. Grain does not.

Similarly with the case of water freezing: water does not itself grow colder by degrees, because degrees are a form of measurement, and it is human beings that measure, not water.

We, therefore, not the data, provide the grid by which we measure or identify. We do this by prior agreement, as to what shall count as what. It is this element of prior agreement that I mean by 'convention'.

Finally, we may wonder what form this agreement takes. Is it collective, tacit, explicit, arbitrary, rule-governed, and so on? (12) In elucidating this we will fill out the concept of convention as used in this thesis, and once again, see why convention is involved, to however slight a degree, in claims about the existence of even such physical things as chairs and tables.

The element of prior agreement is involved in many activities, and so takes many forms. but most strikingly it takes the form of the use of common language and hence of the terms therein. This is not the place to discuss in detail how language is learned, but we may note that when we acquire the use of a language we acquire, with that knowledge, the capacity to refer to prior agreement. This will not normally be explicit: you do not talk with a dictionary in your hand. It may however be explicit when required. Instructing a foreigner or correcting a child one could refer to dictionaries and grammars. The role of prior agreement in the use of language in fact resides in this permanent possibility of making the agreement explicit, if required.

Possession of a common language is an aspect of possession of common knowledge. Without shared prior knowledge we could not be in a position to identify anything. The idea that observation alone can give any form of knowledge or certainty can be shown to be erroneous. Karl Popper, whose first-hand familiarity with the thinking of the Vienna Circle makes him an interesting witness, puts it thus: 'The statement, "Here is a glass of water" cannot be verified by any observational experience. The reason is that the universals which occur in it cannot be correlated with any particular observational experience ...' (13)

What Popper means when he says the statement cannot be verified by observation because it contains universals, is that to know the truth of it one would have to know the use of the concepts denoted by the terms 'glass' and 'water' (or their equivalents in other languages). The statement would, if questioned, have to be supported by further statements, 'This is what we mean by a glass' and 'This is what we mean by water'. If that procedure might take place - and testing the possession of common knowledge in this way would actually occur, of course, only if there was doubt as to the correctness of the use of language, as in the case of a foreigner or a child - then we have exposed the key element of convention as the term is used in this thesis. It resides in the supporting background to the words 'what we mean by'.

What applies to glasses of water applies also to everything else which may be apparently apprehended by observation - chairs and tables, heaps of grain, and so on. Convention is involved in anything one might say about their existence because it is only by possessing prior knowledge that one can know what it is they are. You can only say certain things if you know certain things.

To ask who decided, whether this is arbitrary or rule-governed, and so on, is to miss the point. We have said above, and this is important, that the process can be rule-governed if required - a dictionary can settle a dispute. In the normal course of events it will be self-supporting: what is agreed is what is agreed. Common knowledge is whatever knowledge people share; and so on, through innumerable tautologies. Note also that the definition in the dictionary does not result from a committee decision as to what should be the case, but rather forms an observation of usage, a record of what is the case, and so is itself the recognition of existing agreement.

Take for example, the test case of seeing something for the first time. (N) You may want to know that it is. Now nothing about the thing itself can tell you what it is, any more than observation of a glass of water by itself can tell you that it is a glass of water. This fact may be definitively demonstrated by considering the kind of answer you hope to get to the question 'What is that?' If someone answered 'It's a flat shiny surface with dark sides' you might reply 'I can see that. But what is it?' An answer of the form 'It's a solar panel' (for instance) would be the one you wanted.

Before leaving this important matter, let us consider a little further what the satisfactoriness of that reply implies, since it will throw yet further light on the nature of agreement and hence the sense of 'convention' as used in this thesis.

N: I refer to this as a test case because it reveals how people would deal with a situation in which the element of prior knowledge was absent. It is also relevant at this point for the same reason: it shows us that this deficiency must be overcome in order to resolve questions of identity.

You cannot get from the words 'It's a solar panel' the understanding of what a solar panel is, any more than you can get that from the sight of shiny flat-surfaced three-dimensional object of rectangular shape. You need in turn further knowledge. You need, in fact, to know what a solar panel is before seeing it, as well as knowing that this is a solar panel. Say you did not possess that knowledge. It should then be necessary to break the information down into simpler units. 'A solar panel converts sunlight into energy.' You go on ('what's sunlight?') until you reach the point where knowledge is already shared.

But say you did at once understand the information 'It's a solar panel'. How have you come by this knowledge? Probably nobody has ever had to say to you: 'A solar panel is ...' ('a set of cells which react to sunlight to convert it to energy' or whatever). You have heard people talking about solar panels, in a context which enabled you to apprehend its meaning. The point about this is that there is no explicit rule-governed activity involved.

You might of course have got it wrong. What would happen then? Say you hear people talking about solar panels and the context did not make it clear what sort of things they were. You might then conclude that they were committees formed to inquire into the use of solar energy. Your mistake would become evident in due course, to the extent that someone could identify it and explain.

'That's not what is meant by a solar panel.' Note the words 'what is meant', or 'what we mean'. This is a statement of fact, of what may be observed, rather than a rule. It points to the existence of prior agreement, rather than constitutes its formation.

To put these points another way: if you understand what a solar panel is when receiving the answer 'That's a solar panel' you have evidently gone around with the concept 'solar panel' ready for use before ever having the experience of an instance of it. How then have you gained that facility? It cannot be by experience of solar panels, since you are seeing one for the first time. Rather it must be by observation of agreement among other people. It must be by observing that people use the phrase 'solar panel' in certain ways and in certain contexts, and for obvious practical reasons you will conform to that usage, thus avoiding error and correction. The agreement among other people (a fact of behaviour which may be observed, rather than a rule imposed) and your agreement with that agreement, are examples of what is here meant by convention.

There remains to be dealt with one further possible objection to the concept of convention as we are using it here, and investigating this will provide yet further elucidation of that concept. Since it is claimed that convention plays a part in determining existence

statements, and since convention involves agreement among, and with, other people, there arises a possible difficulty with the question 'Do other people exist?'

At first sight this difficulty seems likely to have two prongs. One would be that a regress could be said to set in if, in answering the question, one refers to agreement, and agreement is such as to involve other people; one might then ask whether those other people exist, and answering that find oneself referring to the existence of further other people, and so on. Alternatively if in avoiding this regress one took the existence of other people as given, then one would be assuming what requires to be shown.

If this objection is valid it makes the question about other people a special case, perhaps a limiting case in terms of the claims of this thesis. If that were so it would be important to note it, and tempting to proceed to ask why this should occur. What would be so special about other people? The answer might be that the special nature is inherent in the sense here attributed to convention, and the limiting effect would be a restriction (albeit not a particularly inconvenient one) on the usefulness of this sense of the term 'convention'.

However it seems that there are a number of existence questions which cannot properly be asked (in the sense of expecting an informative answer) and that 'Do other people exist?' is one such question. Let us now see why this is so.

The question 'Do other people exist?' is problematic, in terms of the claims of this thesis. if it is accepted that existence has a reference to convention, and that convention involves agreement, and agreement is understood to be agreement among or with other people. But if that is all accepted, and the question is therefore problematic, then the answer is already known, so that the question cannot properly be asked, in the sense of expecting an informative answer.

If those claims are not accepted then the question cannot lead to a regress or to a question-begging assumption and so is not problematic.

It might seem from this that the question 'Do other people exist?' has been answered by saying 'Yes, because other people exist.' (14) What has taken place, however, is that an observation has been made about the way the term 'exist' is used. Its use involves other people. It is perhaps for this reason that we must conclude that other people are a special case as far as existence questions are concerned.

Experience

We cannot arrive at the knowledge of the degree of temperature at which water freezes by experiment alone, because we have provided from outside the experiment the idea of degrees of temperature. What, if anything, one might now ask, can be known of by experiment alone? But first we must ask what constitutes experience.

I have been using the term 'experience' as part of a group including 'observation', 'experiment', 'empirical evidence'. (N) in contrast to a group of terms including such forms as 'conceptual', 'consensus', 'agreement' and of course the one with which it forms a pair in the title, 'convention'. Some philosophers (15) have thought it useful to talk of 'raw experience' or the 'raw data', presumably referring to the given data, the actual sensory events as received by the nervous system, as distinct from the data of experience given shape, form or order by, presumably, the secondary phase of the nervous system, the brain. Philosophers should beware of becoming involved in neurology, and any notions they have of what actually happens when (for instance) light falls on the eyeball are probably grossly over-simplified. (N2 overleaf)

N: 'Empirical' from Greek 'empeiria' = 'experience'.

N2: See for instance Koffka (16), who points out that there is no picture involved in the act of seeing, just a possible table of degrees of stimulation. In terms of vision, in Koffka's analysis, the nearest we can come to raw data is light waves which "excite the rods and cones in our retina" (p.79). "When I see a table, this table qua table does not affect my senses at all." (ibid). The solution, Koffka concludes, lies not in terms of stimuli, or of sensation and perception, but of organisation, and that is a subject in itself. (p.98).

In fact my use of the word 'experience' in this work does not involve us in any discussion of the senses, illusion, reality or perception. (N).

N: On the connection of observation with sensation Gilbert Ryle has some interesting points to make in 'The Concept of Mind' (17). This passage includes the famous remarks on the privacy of sensations, which he says is an unexciting but important point, that you cannot "hold my catches, win my races, eat my meals, frown my frowns or dream my dreams". The point he is concerned to make in these pages is that sensations are not objects of observation at all. Observing, however, does involve having sensations. For the present purpose however, in so far as sensations are involved in observation, their nature or form need not concern us. It is sufficient to note that observation and experience are logically interconnected.

It is the part played by an observer that distinguishes something as experience. Experience, for present purposes, it whatever involves the presence of an observer.

In the above work we have arrived at the general conclusion that if the truth or falsehood of a statement makes no possible difference to anything outside the statement then there is something more than vacuous about the statement, there is something positively wrong with it.

Wittgenstein expressed much the same idea when he said "A wheel that can be turned though nothing else moves with it, is not part of the mechanism." (18) The same would apply if there is in principle no way of telling whether a statement is true or false, but in fact for the same reason. If there is no way of telling, then it can make no difference, and so the statement was no real statement at all, but empty sounds deceitfully disguised.

What then of those cases where an existence statement appears to hold for purely logical reasons? (How, as Kant would put it, is a priori knowledge possible?) Anselm's ontological argument, for the existence of God, for instance, (19) that a being a greater than which could not be conceived must exist, because otherwise a greater being could be conceived, might be considered to hold good for purely logical reasons, even if nobody ever did the conceiving. On the face of it logical necessity, and hence

whatever may be said about necessary being, does not in any way depend on the presence of an observer, and so defeats our case. But how informative are statements about necessary beings? (20) The answer is that necessary existence can never be proved of a particular item, only of a general case. The value can never be substituted for the variable. It is as in cases of probability: one ends only with a statistical truth, never a matter of instance.

If therefore it can be said only that there must be a value to the variable but never what that value is, then you cannot prove by this means the existence of any particular thing. It is as if the answer turns out to be not an answer to the question which was asked, and therefore not informative on that subject at all.

Regarding the role of experience in existence statements we may now summarise the above argument as follows:

1. If there is no difference between an item's existing and its not existing, the term is not being properly used.
2. If a part is played by an observer in the state of affairs under consideration then there is such a difference.
3. If for some reason it is impossible to say that an observer plays such a part in the case then it cannot be shown that condition 1. does not apply.

Note that we cannot show that there is no difference if an observer cannot be shown to be involved. There remains moreover the intermediate case, say 2a, in which it is possible for an observer to be playing a part, but this is not certain. This represents those cases where we do not know whether or not something exists; although we know what set of events would determine the matter these have not taken place and we do not know whether they will. (21)

If such uncertainty could not be accommodated by the theory then the theory would be flawed. (N)

Convention and Experience

It will be seen that for all their mutual interaction convention and experience cannot be defined in terms of each other. They deal with independent aspects of the provision of meaning, and it is not at all as if one starts where the other stops. The one - an element of prior agreement - and the other - involvement of an observer - are not intrinsically related. It is partly for this reason, in fact, that their joint and rival roles in existence-statement theory is of special interest.

N: Richard Routley (22) makes a similar point: "It is simply that a satisfactory logical treatment will have to allow appropriately for indeterminacy."

References

1. WINCH. P. 'The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy', Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973.
p.4.
2. ACTON, H. B. 'The Illusion of the Epoch', Cohen & West, 1955. pp.80-93.
3. Op.cit. p.72.
4. Ibid. p.73.
5. ROUTLEY. Richard. 'On What There Is Not'.
Philosophical and Phenomenological Research, 43.
December 1982. pp.151-178. Referred to above, p. 179.
N. Section II.3. (reference 2).
6. Op.cit. p.164.
7. Ibid.
8. SENIOR. M. 'Noise and Sound in Llandudno'. New
Scientist, 6th November, 1975. p.322.
9. Ibid. p.323.

(references cont.)

10. Op.cit. p.73.

11. Ibid.

12. The consideration which follows was inspired by suggestions by Dr. Paul Helm.

13. POPPER, K. 'Conjectures and Refutations'. Routledge, 1972. pp. 277-278.

14. I owe this observation to Dr. Oswald Hanfling.

15. See above, I.5. and DILMAN, Ilham, 'Quine on Ontology, Necessity and Experience, A Philosophical Critique' (reference 15 in I.5), Albany, Suny Press, 1984. pp.10,12.

16. KOFFKA, K. 'Principles of Gestalt Psychology'. New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co. 1935.

17. RYLE, G. 'The Concept of Mind', Peregrin Books, 1970. pp.197 ff.

18. WITTGENSTEIN, L. 'Philosophical Investigations', 271.

19. See above, Section I.3.

20. See Appendix VI 'The Biggest Snail on Earth', and references.

21. See above, Section II. 4.

22. Op.cit. p.165.

IV.

TESTING THE THEORY

Introduction

Having derived from the investigation so far at least the loose form of a theory. it will be instructive now to test it for its ability to be applied in particular cases. Since the theory is in the first place derived from observation of particular cases, it would be no surprise to find that this is possible.(N) What is of interest, and use, however, is that the attempt to apply the theory to cases other than those from which it is derived gives rise to the need for slight but crucial modifications. If these in turn enable us to apply it generally, we shall have succeeded. This process of adaptation, is after all, what the testing is for.

We start, then, with the preliminary theory in the form as given above (1). Both experience and convention are necessary determinants of existence; neither are sufficient. Assertions of existence are not solely determined by experience. Assertions of existence are not solely determined by convention.

N: The choice of example, both in Section II and here, is governed only by the criterion of usefulness for the purpose, and by the wish to provide a historical context in Section II, while a modern one seems more appropriate here.

However, a strong element of the one may compensate for a degree of weakness in the other. By 'convention' we mean agreement among relevant people: by 'experience' we mean primarily first-hand observation, but may be disposed to include second-hand reporting regarded by the asserter as reliable.

Clearly this needs considerable clarification and refinement. (for instance by demonstration of 'relevant' and 'reliable'). and it is to be hoped that the following series of tests will assist in providing those. It should be noted that in our discussions the 'agreement' or 'convention' element has not always been as to whether something existed, but sometimes also as to what it would be if it did exist. (2)

To see how this formula might be put to use, and what would result, I propose to ask the following questions:

1. Does Extra-Sensory Perception exist?
2. Do Black Holes exist?
3. Does evil exist?
4. Does God exist?

Both the first two questions are of a real and practical nature, whereas the third and fourth relate rather more (though as we shall see not exclusively) to philosophical considerations.

The purpose of these attempts to apply the theory is to throw light on the procedure by which the questions can be answered. This I take to be equivalent to deciding what the questions mean. and both are to do with deciding what the difference would be. if the answer were yes or if the answer were no.

This is not. of course. the same thing as providing an answer to the questions. It may however be a useful step towards such a goal.

1. Does Extra-Sensory Perception (ESP) exist?

First. we must consider whether this is an appropriate question. Should we not rather say 'Does ESP occur?' or 'Do people practise ESP?' Would we (leaving aside the absurdity of the questions) say 'Does counting exist?' rather than 'Do people count?'. or 'Does golfing exist?' rather than 'Do people play golf?' It would be as well to dispose of this difficulty straight away.

In fact this consideration relies on an analogy with perception which extra-sensory perception does not necessarily sustain. ESP is not supposed to be just a way of perceiving, but an ability to do so in a distinct form. an ability which some people. and not others. are supposed to possess. in other words something equivalent to a knack.

As a second step this observation allows us to identify two distinct meanings of 'perception'. both of the word on its own and in the phrase 'extra-sensory perception'. In one sense it is a participle and in the other a substantive. In the case of 'perception' this is less clear, although we do use the word sometimes as an abstract noun, for instance when distinguishing perception and sensation.

ESP, then, means two things:

1. The process of perceiving extra-sensorily; in which case one would talk of its occurring.
2. The faculty of this. of which one might talk of its being.

Of course sense 2 is logically dependent on sense 1. since there could be no faculty if there were not instances of the acts or events. or rather it would be hard to say anything about it if there were. It would not be confusing. I think. to express this as a distinction between the acts and the activity. Although the activity comes into existence as a generalisation from the acts. as such apparent summations often do it then takes on an independent grammatical life, so that one could for instance legislate against it in general, without having to say which particular instances of its future occurrence were against the law. (There might, of course, as the anti-ESP law would hope. be none. ESP the activity would still remain illegal).

It is no news, of course, to learn that we have this generalising ability, the ability to form universals, but the point I wish to make is that it is because of it that one can say 'Does ESP exist?'

Now it is my task in the present sequence to test the general theory that experience and convention are co-determinants of existence statements: that existence statements get their meanings from a reference to them both, that neither on its own is sufficient, to determine the validity of existence statements: and that they may play a complementary role, in that a relative deficiency of one can be compensated for by an extreme of the other, provided both are in some degree present.

It is plain at once that any such question as 'Does ESP exist?' will be asked in a context, and that the context in which it is asked would initially appear to affect the outcome. This, we must say at once, could lead to an unsatisfactory result which might well undermine the theory. If, by our terms, ESP were found to exist in one cultural setting (say the Glastonbury Midsummer Festival), in which anyone asking the question could produce to their own satisfaction sufficient quantities of experience (which I shall refer to, as above at II.4.7.. by the letter p) and convention (q), and would not accept as relevant any contrary findings: and not in another cultural context, say a police investigation into a major crime, where the

validity of the p and the q factors would be differently judged. This would be an unsatisfactory outcome because it would mean that ESP would both exist and not exist. which is self-contradictory.

That is to say ESP would appear to exist or not to exist because the matter is partly decided by convention. and the consensus involved in convention can vary with contexts. This is not the same as saying (for instance) that humming-birds exist in one climate. and so in one context, and not in another. The climatic context is not claimed to be a condition for the existence of humming-birds (but merely for their location), whereas context-based convention is by this theory being claimed to be a condition for the existence of ESP. If one body of opinion held that humming-birds exist. and another that they were illusory, then we would have a similar situation to that of ESP and would have to find a way of dealing with it. (3)

Another way of putting this would be to say that a confusion has crept in through the loose use of the word 'exist'. That humming-birds occur in one climate (and so in one context) and not in another has no bearing on the existence of humming-birds, merely on where, if they exist, they may be found. If convention has a bearing on the existence of ESP (or indeed on humming-birds, or whatever),

however. it might be thought that since convention can apparently vary from one context to another so can the decision as to whether or not ESP exists.

So the problem is not just that ESP might be said to occur in one context and not in another (which would pre-empt the question of its existence) but that in one context it might be held (as far as the convention determinant of its existence was concerned) to exist, and in another context equally firmly held not to exist. Although the process of discussing this apparent difficulty reveals the impotence of convention on its own, we shall also see below, in the final pages of this sub-section, the essential part played by the residual element of convention in an apparently experience-related situation.

Now it is clear that there would be no point in referring one cultural system to the other, since they may be taken to be mutually unacceptable. We may take it also that the validity of the q factor is confirmed, for those concerned - since this is only to say that there is a predisposition within the context to answer the question in a certain way.

(4) This therefore lays the responsibility, if the question can be asked and answered at all, on the p factor. If it were said now (as we were tempted to say before (5) that the question is what would count as experience, of ESP or whatever, this is to risk referring experience back to

accepted opinion. which would amount to making p dependent on q. so that they are not two conditions but one. That procedure is precisely what is adopted by closed systems (6) so that the effect is both that they cannot be faulted and that they are ultimately void of informative content. (7) It would mean in this case that all questions of existence are convention-based, a conclusion we might have come to but have rejected (8). What is needed therefore is a test of the validity of p which would be acceptable to those who are asking the question.

In order to overcome this possible short-coming of the theory when put into practice in this extreme case, we need to provide a mechanism which can determine p in all cases.

Such a mechanism ... exists. (Such a mechanism, that is, is familiar and apparent to us, and is generally accepted).

It is the principle of experiment. The criterion by which this is judged is its failure or success.

Let us take first the example in which people claim to have experience of ESP. They might, for instance, claim to be able to dowse or to divine for information with the use of a pendulum (as many people in fact do). The case for divining is however (according to an article in The Independent), in doubt:

"The use of diviners can be traced back at least 500 years, and it comes as a shock to most people when you tell them there is no evidence for the validity of water divining."
(9)

Moreover, not only is there no evidence in favour of dowsing (the article continues), but there are clear ways of disproving its validity.

"The reader can make some simple experiments. Tie a weight to a piece of string about a foot long. Look out some snapshots of men and women and enlist the aid of two friends in separate sessions. Tell the first to rest his elbow on the table and hold the pendulum steadily over a photo of a male. Explain that the pendulum can sex photographs, animals and insects, and that after a few seconds the pendulum will begin to move backwards and forwards over the photograph. The friend may be surprised that this occurs. Now substitute a female photograph and explain that, for a female, the pendulum will start to move in gradually increasing circles. The pendulum moves as predicted.

Now enjoin the first friend to silence and admit the second friend. Go through the same procedure, but this time say authoritatively that the female will elicit the forward-backward movement, a male the circular movement. The pendulum will perform accordingly." (10)

The researcher attributes the effect to unconscious muscular movements. The article continues with further statistics on the success of dowsing. In New South Wales, Australia, records show that

"Successful bores at points selected by dowsers were fewer than at points selected by geologists. The percentage of absolute failures among divined wells was double that for non-divined wells."

I give these as examples of experiment in use: the researcher is establishing his case against the existence of this type of ESP by providing p material, in defiance of the q background which (he says) "starts from the standpoint that water divining is an established fact."

Let us now consider the alternative context, in which it was generally considered certain that ESP did not exist.

The police force of the state of Massachussets investigating the case of the Boston Strangler might be thought to present such a context. As a last resort, however, a Dutch diviner named Hurkos was allowed to give his views on the identity of the strangler. He overcame the extreme scepticism of the police by correctly telling one of the officers some details of his personal life which no-one else could have known. His method of dealing with the dispute as to the existence of his extra-sensory perception, in fact, was to provide a sufficient input of the p factor to overcome the almost total lack of the q

one. There must, however, have been a latent quantity of that available, however minute, or presumably he would not have been in the police station at all.

It is interesting to find that although we have quite clearly identified the procedure for deciding whether ESP exists, and even seen that procedure in use, we have not given (and did not intend to give) the answer to the question. We may note in passing the importance of success as a criterion of experiment. Hurkos in fact did not successfully identify the Boston Strangler, and his claim must, in our terms, be judged by that. This would leave us having to provide an alternative explanation for his other feats.

His escape route, however, remains open: he claimed that in fact he did identify the strangler, and it was the police who got the wrong man.

Similarly those who continue to use the pendulum technique after accepting the results of the tests reported in The Independent (which they may, after all, try for themselves, thus making this indisputably relevant to the p factor) might make some claim such as that they are still nevertheless harnessing the power of the sub-conscious to inspire their guesswork, and it would be open to them to limit their claims as to the conditions, for instance non-experimental ones, under which this tends to work.

We have seen in this case of the existence of ESP how a positive q factor might be redressed by a negative p one, and a negative q factor counteracted by a positive p one. In the sub-section which follows it will be interesting to find that the process also works the other way round: that is, that p factors of either polarity may be counterbalanced by q ones. It is not the case, it seems, that p is in undisputed control, but we shall see that in the end its role is crucial.

References

1. Above, II.4. p. 207.
2. See for instance II.4. pp.192, 195, 199.
3. I owe these thoughts to suggestions by Dr. Paul Helm.
4. See the discussion in II. 4. above.
5. See II.4. pp. 205-6.
6. See Section II.4a.
7. Above, II.4a. p. 219.
8. For example, I.2. pp.40-41.
9. The Independent, 11th September, 1988. p.15.
10. Ibid.

2. Do Black Holes exist ?

"I had already discussed with Roger Penrose the idea of defining a black hole as the set of events from which it was not possible to escape to a large distance. which is now the generally accepted definition."

Stephen Hawking. 'A Brief History of Time' (1)

Hawking traces the history of the concept: "The term black hole is of very recent origin." (2) He shows how subsequent work has produced considerable detail in the description of the supposed phenomena known by this name. "The work that Roger Penrose and I did between 1965 and 1970 showed that, according to general relativity, there must be a singularity of infinite density and space-time curvature within a black hole." (3) "In 1976, however, the study of black holes was revolutionized by Werner Israel ... Israel showed that, according to general relativity, non-rotating black holes must be very simple ... " (4) Hawking is confident in his knowledge of the details of their characteristics. "One can also consider the possibility that there might be black holes with masses much less than that of the sun ... Low mass black holes could form only if matter was compressed to enormous densities by very large external pressures." (5)

The number of them is also of great interest to him: "So if we could determine how many primordial black holes there are now, we would learn a lot about the very early stages of the universe." (6)

In view of all this it comes as a distinct surprise to us to realise that neither Hawking nor anyone else has discovered a black hole.

"Black holes are one of only a fairly small number of cases in the history of science in which a theory was developed in great detail as a mathematical model before there was any evidence from observations that it was correct. Indeed, this used to be the main argument of opponents of black holes: how could one believe in objects for which the only evidence was calculations based on the dubious theory of general relativity?" (7)

The reason for no-one's having found a black hole appears to be partly that they cannot do so, in principle. "How could we hope to detect a black hole, as by its very definition it does not emit any light?" (8) Yet this little difficulty does not seem to deter them. "Further encouragement for the existence of black holes came in 1967 with the discovery by a research student at Cambridge, Jocelyn Bell, of objects in the sky that were emitting regular pulses of radio waves." (9)

The behaviour of Cygnus X-1 is puzzling: might not this then be evidence for the existence of black holes? Its unseen companion causing its erratic orbit would be of "too large a mass to be a neutron star. It seems, therefore, that it must be a black hole." (10) "A black hole seems to be the only really natural explanation of the observations." (11) And, more confidently, "We also now have evidence for several other black holes ... " (12) and "The number of black holes may well be greater even than the number of visible stars ... " (13) And so on.

Hawking's premiss seems to go like this: events which are otherwise unexplained are compatible with the existence of black holes: so they provide possible evidence for the existence of black holes, which itself is indicated by the theory of general relativity. He then seems to have decided (a) that there could be black holes, then (b) that there must be black holes, and so (c) that evidence compatible with the existence of them is evidence for the existence of them. On the basis of this he proceeds to tell us how black holes behave (".... they glow like a hot body, and the smaller they are, the more they glow") (14) before he has produced compelling evidence that there are any.

Yet with his usual candour Hawking admits that all the work he and Penrose and others have been doing on trying to solve the theoretical problems to which the existence of black holes gives rise would be unnecessary if it turned out that black holes did not exist. Hawking has a bet with a colleague at the California Institute of Technology that Cygnus X-1 (the only likely possibility of finding one so far) does not contain a black hole. "This is a form of insurance policy for me. I have done a lot of work on black holes. and it would all be wasted if it turned out that black holes do not exist." (15)

So here we have a case where a considerable body of authoritative opinion (not to mention a considerable expenditure of research grants) is committed to the existence of black holes. Yet "the only real evidence" for them is "calculations based on the dubious theory of general relativity" (7) There is secondary evidence from Cygnus X-1: "By now. I would say that we are about 95% certain" that Cygnus X-1 contains a black hole. "but the bet has yet to be settled" (8).

If we now apply the 'p' and 'q' analysis, as in the last example. we find that there is a considerable body of agreement as to what black holes would be, if they were found to exist: that if the item posited existed. it would be a black hole in the sense which has been fully described.

The only evidence which tends to prove their existence comes from the calculations. All this must come under the 'q' heading, as being agreement constituting a convention.

It is at first extremely difficult to see how there could ever be direct evidence of the 'p' kind, since the definition of black holes appears to rule it out. Secondary evidence as from observation of Cygnus X-1, however, is compatible with the existence of black holes; and this, if extended sufficiently, might provide a 'p' input. However all this evidence might still be evidence for something else. Hawking admits that the p ingredient is still missing, when he says that they are only 95% certain Cygnus X-1 contains a black hole. that the bet is therefore not settled, and that it might turn out that black holes do not exist. He implies that if another explanation is found for the anomalous behaviour of Cygnus X-1 he would accept that other explanations might hold for all supposed cases of black holes, and that therefore, lacking a p ingredient, he would accept that black holes do not exist.

The research grants are therefore being awarded purely on the basis of a q input. That this is not satisfactory is demonstrated by the urgency with which the elusive p ingredient is pursued (the irony being that this search itself involves the need for further research grants).

In the meantime although we cannot say that another explanation is forthcoming and that black holes (lacking a p input) do not exist. we cannot say either that they do exist. until such a p input is established.

It is interesting to note that the authorities on this subject apparently agree with our interpretation of what is involved in the existence of black holes. since they continue to seek conclusive observational evidence for something of which they have convinced themselves by calculation. In other words. they hold that existence is a matter of experience as well as agreement of opinion.

References

1. HAWKING. Stephen. 'A Brief History of Time'. Bantam Press 1988. p.99
2. Ibid. p.81.
3. Ibid. p.88.
4. Ibid. p.90.
5. Ibid. p.96.
6. Ibid. p.97.
7. Ibid. p.92.
8. Ibid. p.93.
9. Loc.cit.
10. Op.cit. p.94.
11. Loc.cit.
12. Ibid.
13. Op.cit. p.95.
14. Ibid. p.97.
15. Ibid. p.94.
16. Loc.cit.

3. Does evil exist?

It is necessary first to distinguish two apparently different ways the question might apply. First, it might be asked whether there was a quality, evil, as well as evil things. Call this sense A. More fundamentally it might be asked whether evil acts and so on are not simply cultural constructs, so that we should rather say 'We view and term such-and-such evil from the point of view of this cultural context', so that there is not a quality of being evil which can be transferred from one context to another. In this, sense B. I think it would be better to say 'Does evilness exist?' in that the question refers to a notional quality shared by evil deeds and so on rather than to a possible outside agency, the force of evil, the spirit of evil, the devil, essence of evil, or whatever. For the purpose of asking the question which will help us test our theory this makes no difference, however, and we may more conveniently stay with the slightly less accurate form of sense B. 'Does evil exist?' may then be paraphrased:

A: Is there a transcendent negative or destructive force?

B: Are there deeds which are bad in themselves?

One can of course intend to ask both questions at once, with the same words. Indeed it might be possible to show that a negative or positive answer to either entails the same for the other, though I do not intend to embark on this. They can, however, be asked quite separately, with no interest in a possible connection.

Religions have been based on the affirmative to A. They are termed dualist, and a prime example of such is Zoroastrianism. Zarathustra's teaching envisages "not a single ultimate principle in the Universe, but two." (1) In the Zoroastrian world, then, evil is an independent principle. Let us try to see to what extent convention and experience are involved in the meaning of the Zoroastrian's affirmative answer to question A.

Now on the face of it there is no part played by experience in this at all. We do not have access to the transcendental world in which these things take place. Yet we know that Zoroastrianism is very much a religion of this world. In fact that is what the world is for: to take part in the cosmic battle against evil. "All beneficent existence ... had a shared aim, to struggle against the Hostile Spirit and the evil which he had maliciously brought into the perfect world of Mazda's creation ... "

(2) Clearly we may see all this as metaphor, as a set of images expressive of moral principles. It would be easy to see it, thus, as a means of translating questions of sense

A into those of sense B. This leaves aside, however, the matter of the belief held by Zoroastrians in the reality of evil as a primal principle, that is as something pre-existing all its manifestations.

Seen in that way, however, evil is a Platonic 'ideal' in a specific form. As such it innately rules out experience as a determinant of its existence. I would say of it what I said of Russell's remarks on uncounted numbers. (3) "The point is, of course, that these numbers do not have any sort of existence at all until they are thought of." To say that something pre-exists its manifestations is to speak with hindsight. It cannot be said until it is too late to say it. If there have been such manifestations then how can it be shown that the Ideal pre-existed them. The only evidence for it is them. If there have never been such manifestations then the matter would not arise, since one would have no means of knowing or speaking of the Ideal, and given that that situation could go on for ever it would be exactly the same in all respects as if the Ideal did not exist, for which reason I would propose not claiming that it did.

To translate A into B is, of course, simply to move from Plato to Aristotle, from the ante rem to the in re location of universals. It was not to be expected that we should break new ground on the subject of evil.

We have been forced to make this move, however, because the attempt to understand what could be meant by the existence of evil in the A sense broke down at exactly the point where we found that experience was inapplicable as a reference: without manifestations there is no difference between its existing and its not existing. If Zoroastrians believe in evil as an outside force, they must do so in the light of having experienced examples of its effects in the world.

Sense B - is it evil in itself, or do we just see it as such from our standpoint? - seems even more clearly a case of decision-making rather than discovery. After all, it means: 'Do we regard moral judgements as absolute or relative?' Let us see how the matter is actually put by a protagonist, the philosopher C. L. Stevenson:

"1. 'This is wrong' means I disapprove of this: do so as well ...

3. 'This is good' means I approve of this: do so as well." (4)

Now in Stevenson's formulation evil has disappeared as part of the process: it is a question of attitude only. It is not so much that Stevenson would say that evil does not exist: the question does not arise, because there is no need to posit an outside factor. The phenomena can perfectly well be explained in other ways. This is not a proof that evil does not exist.

It is an argument to the effect that there is no reason to suppose that it does. That, however, is not the convention-based approach that we might have been expecting. It remains open to refutation by evidential means, in that if Professor Stevenson were to give as his reason for omitting evil from the equation the lack of evidence for evil, then his argument would fail if such evidence were produced; and if (as would presumably be the actual case) he claimed that there was no need for evil as a concept to be introduced, because all moral judgements and behaviour could be explained by attitudes of approval or disapproval, then it would be open to somebody disagreeing to identify a moral act which could not be explained by attitude.

Someone arguing from the contrary position - to the effect that there is a role for the concept of evil in moral acts and judgements - would receive some assistance from those philosophers (such as R. M. Hare) who wish to point out that moral statements are not just prescriptive, but universal: "When we commend an object, our judgement is not solely about that particular object, but is inescapably about objects like it." (5) The object we commend and the objects like it must have something in common. Might not therefore the quality held in common by the objects in the contrary case be describable by the term 'evil'? 'Good' and 'evil' may be the names for those qualities which make up the likeness Hare refers to.

The distinction we have now noted is between a school of thought which proposes an outside element, beyond and distinct from the phenomena, as do Zoroastrians; and that of the subjective school, exemplified by Stevenson, which sees the term as unnecessary because it recognises nothing beyond the phenomena except an attitude on the part of the observer. This is clearly a case which may be described by the application of what was earlier termed 'the co-extensiveness principle' (6). "If the name is co-extensive with the phenomena, then we may ask about its usefulness. If it is not co-extensive than one may ask about its identity." (7) What follows from the decision ('Is N co-extensive with the phenomena?') is summarised in the passage cited. We may add, related to the question of the existence of evil, that the linguistic question leading from the answer 'yes' 'Do we need the name?', which bears a clearly conventional emphasis, at the same time focuses on the observed phenomena with which the name is held to be co-extensive.

Answering the question 'Does evil exist?' in that particular circumstantial background therefore gives us an example of the conjunction of the elements of experience and convention. It consists of a three-step process.

Disapproval (according to these philosophers) is a cultural attitude. and therefore a matter of agreement or convention. Recognising similarities among things one disapproves of depends on experiencing these instances or manifestations of them. The decision as to whether to call these similarities. grouped as a quality. evil. is a conceptual matter. a choice of terminology. Even in this relativistic area of the sense B question the elements cannot function adequately on their own. but rely on one another.

References

1. LING. Trevor. 'A History of Religion East and West'. Macmillan. 1977. p.78.
2. BOYCE. Mary. in FOY. Whitfield (ed.) 'Man's Religious Quest' Croom Helm. London. 1978. p.611.
3. See above I.2. p 34.
4. STEVENSON. C. L. 'Ethics and Language'. Yale University Press. 1944. p.21.
5. HARE. R.M. 'The Language of Morals'. Oxford. 1970. p.129.
6. See above. II.2. pp. 150 ff.
7. Loc.cit. and see diagram there and in next sub-section.

Finally. let us see whether the techniques which have arisen in the course of these considerations of the roles of convention and experience in existence statements can help in the clarification of the following question.

4. Does God exist?

and how the distinction itself. between convention and experience. applies to that question.

First. we must suppose that God is to be defined by characteristics which do not in themselves beg the question. If the definition adopted were such that it was simply a redescription of something which had already been established as existing, or was assumed by the terms being used to exist, then there would be no point in asking the question. Don Cupitt, for instance, in his book 'Taking Leave of God' (1) redefined God as something he called 'the religious requirement'. "There is so far as we are concerned no God but the religious requirement". (2) Now since he has presumably come to this conclusion by first identifying something as 'the religious requirement' then there would be no point in asking the question 'Does God exist?' It would be equivalent to saying 'Does this item which I have experienced exist?' It is clear from Cupitt's statement that the question of the existence of the religious requirement is not under debate. He is apparently familiar with it and knows what it is.

Similarly St. Anselm's proof makes use of a definition of God which, as indeed the proof then shows, ensures the existence of the term in question. A being than which a greater cannot be thought must, Anselm shows, exist. But this is to operate within a closed system. To define God in such a way that he must exist makes any question as to his existence irrelevant, rather than answering it. The question 'Does God exist?' cannot be a real question in such a context.

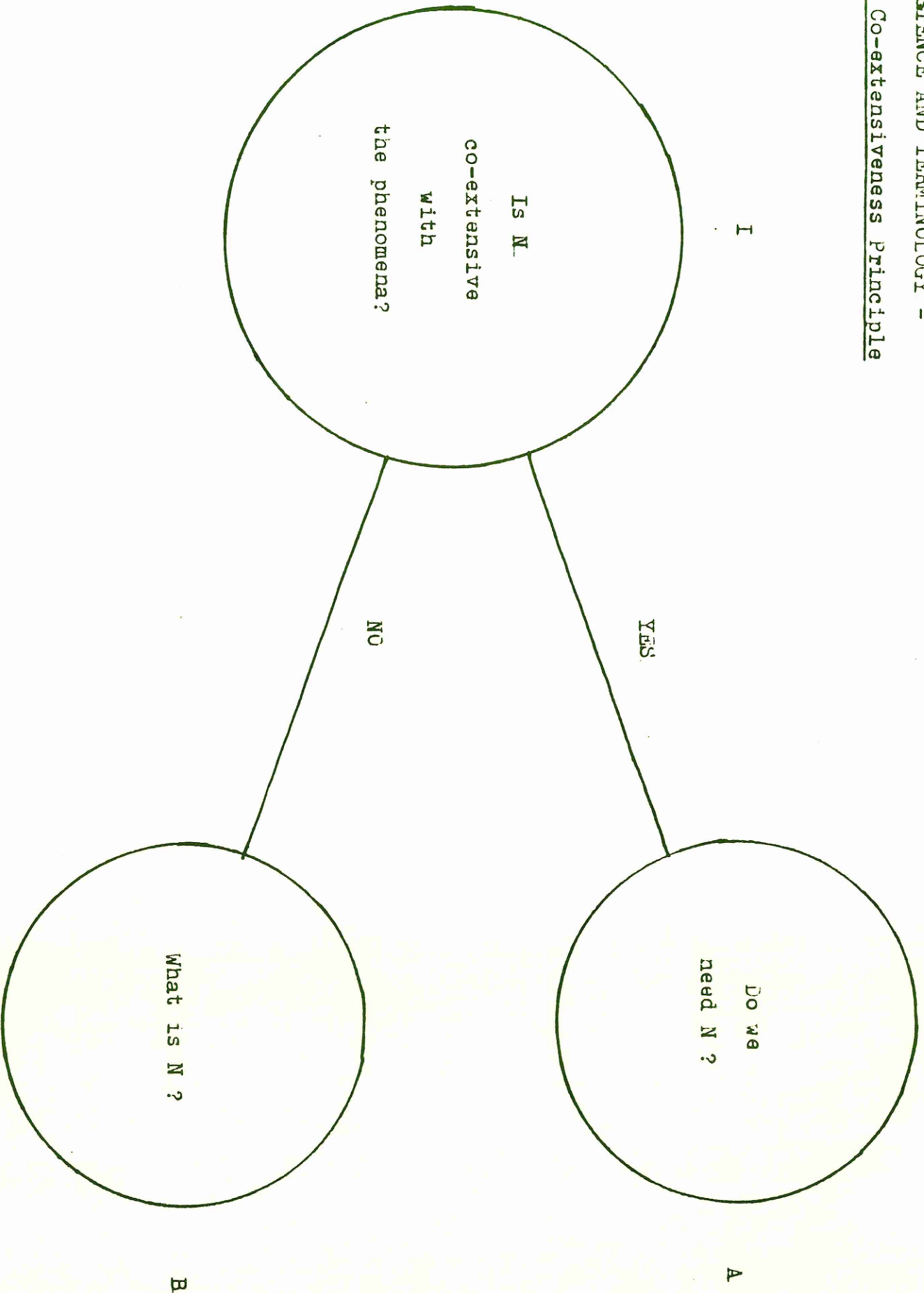
It is moreover not clear from these and other definitions what form of existence God might have beyond the existence of the items with which he is being equated. Cupitt makes the point that he does intend to 'add something' (in his phrase) (3) beyond what is fully describable in terms of human consciousness. He wishes to say, in effect, 'here is human consciousness, with all its aspects and manifestations; and here again, albeit internalised within this structure, is God.' This is not the same thing as saying 'here is the complex one may call human consciousness and among the many components which compose it is something we intend to call God.'

We may therefore approach the question 'Does God exist?' by asking a preliminary question: 'Is God, as defined by the person asking the question, nothing additional to the phenomena already identified? Or is God something beyond or outside those phenomena?'

This we have identified above as 'the co-extensiveness principle' (4) and we clarified the procedures derived from it by the accompanying diagram.

(see overleaf)

EXISTENCE AND TERMINOLOGY -
The Co-extensiveness Principle



It is clear from this that if the answer to the co-extensiveness' question is that God is not being defined as something beyond or additional to the items already identified, then the question 'Does God exist?' does not apply. There is nothing for the question to do. We would then need to ask quite a different question, one of a terminological nature.

Faced with these potential difficulties, if we are to ask the question meaningfully at all we must adopt a definition which does not assume the answer. It is proposed therefore to use for present purposes a purely hypothetical definition, on the understanding that any terms which do not remove the meaning of the question could be substituted for those here used. That is, a school of thought might wish to say that God was transparent, multidimensional and left-handed: the only requirement in the end would be to add at least some qualities which were specific enough to distinguish God from other transparent, multidimensional and left-handed creatures. On this basis we may now choose, simply for convenience, five attributes to define God.

God is

Omniscient

Omnipotent

Eternal

Unchanging

Omnipresent

Among these we may now make distinctions. First, something, such as gravitational attraction, or, in terrestrial terms, the atmosphere, might be omnipresent, without our suspecting it to be God. Similarly something, such as matter, might be eternal, and we would not wish to say that was therefore God. The same might be said of the attribute unchanging. The square root of 64, for instance, or the relation between the pole and the equator, might be found to be eternal and unchanging, but we would not be inclined to conclude that either of them was God.

It does not follow that if something were eternal, unchanging and omnipresent we would not find ourselves inclined to identify it as God. However the compulsion would be very much greater if we discovered a being which was either omniscient or omnipotent, and if such a being were both, or if it combined either quality with one or more of those just mentioned, then the compulsion to accept that this conformed to the definition of God would be overriding. And clearly if we knew that any being had all the qualities listed then we would have no doubt that this was God.

In other words if we take the first two characteristics as being identifying ones. and the next three as being contributory to that identification. then we have what was termed above (5) upper and lower case conditions. and we may therefore run the programme devised in the section entitled 'Syndrome Construction'. Allocating the symbols: Omniscient: A. Omnipotent: B. Eternal: x. Unchanging: y. Omnipresent: z.

Syndrome construction: upper and lower case conditions. Given the identification of two upper case and three lower case conditions. a set of events is identified as N if it possesses the characteristics represented by any one of the following:

A + B	A + x + z
A + x	B + x + z
B + x	A + B + x + z
A + B + x	A + y + z
A + y	B + y + z
B + y	A + B + y + z
A + B + y	A + x + y + z
A + x + y	B + x + y + z
B + x + y	A + B + x + y + z
A + B + x + y	
A + z	
B + z	

From this, using the sign 'v' to represent a disjunction ('either or both') we may formulate a set of sufficient conditions, as follows:

$$1. \quad A + B$$

or

$$2. \quad (A \vee B) + ((x \vee y) \vee z)$$

There remains the point as to how one would set about deciding whether an item does have characteristics A.B.x.y.z. Here it might be useful to distinguish between two possible conclusions one might come to.

I. If P has characteristics

$A + B$ or $(A \vee B) + ((x \vee y) \vee z)$ then P is God.

II. If something is God, then it has characteristics

$A + B$ or $(A \vee B) + ((x \vee y) \vee z)$.

In the first case we have an item and wish to know whether it is God. This is comparable to the cases we discussed in II.4 (6). Since this item exists, if it is God, then God exists. This we may categorise, in the terms used above, as a conclusion which starts from the primary, p, information, and applies the q factor of decision based on agreement (agreement, in this case, on what counts as being God). It is experience which tells us whether a given item has certain characteristics. It is convention which decides whether something having those characteristics is God. (7)

In the second case we start with a q background. having decided what will count as God. and proceed towards the p input. by. presumably. inspecting the world to see if any item in it answers to the qualifying definition. In other words whereas in I we started from a p situation and brought to bear the q aspects. in II we start from q and introduce p.

We thus have a set of procedures which may be undertaken as a means of asking the question 'Does God exist?' or, to put the matter another way, of understanding what is meant by the assertion 'God exists'.

Conclusion

The process of testing the theory has brought to light some elements in the investigation of the roles of convention and experience in existence statements which might be worth underlining.

The usefulness of the distinction itself becomes apparent when we simplify the background into p and q factors. as we have found it practical to do in these tests.

In certain circumstances this distinction may be amplified by an analysis into upper and lower case conditions. as we found it useful to do when discussing syndrome construction. in Section II.2. (8)

Throughout, and particularly in the section dealing with the world of science and medicine (9) it has been useful for us to bear in mind and frequently to note the distinction between an invention and a discovery, and this has led us to a closely related idea, the principle of co-extensiveness, which has just been applied in the above sub-section.

These related mechanisms of distinction have turned out to possess the merit of providing a flexible range of procedures for dealing with the aspects of existence statements, and they form the infrastructure of the general theory outlined above.

References

1. CUPITT. Don. 'Taking Leave of God' SCM Press. 1980.
2. Ibid. p.92.
3. Ibid. p.6.
4. Above. II.2. p.150.
5. Above. II.2. p.172.
6. Pp. 195 ff.
7. For a fuller discussion of the connection of the idea of 'absolute existence'. of the application of the concepts of 'verbal decision' and observation. and the relation of decisions made in the world of science to the question of the existence of God. see MILES. T. R. 'Religion and the Scientific Outlook' Allen & Unwin. 1959. This is discussed in the light of the arguments developed in this theses in Appendix VII.
8. See II.2. pp. 171 ff.
9. Above. II.2.

APPENDICES

Introduction

In a remark on Notes and References at the end of the Table of Contents at the start of this thesis, mention was made of "a number of extended footnotes ... which I did not wish to leave undiscussed but which do not form part of the direct course of the argument." These follow here as Appendices. They are diverse in subject matter and bear no structured relationship. Their order is that of their relevance to the text. The one thing they have in common is that, in their different ways, they are supportive of the train of thought and assist in the investigation. Saying that they do not form part of the direct course of the argument is in fact another way of saying that they help to fill out its background.

APPENDIX I

Relating to Section I.2

Brunton on Berkeley: A Note on the Grammar of Discovery

J. A. Brunton. in his paper 'The Absolute Existence of Unthinking Things' (1). contrasts the logic of experiences - for example pain - with the logic of external objects. (2). We can talk of pain which is not currently observed because we have experienced pain. But have we not also experienced external objects? It is only the ones which we wish to say nobody has experienced - such as undiscovered fossils - that are in a different logical sphere. Note however that the logic is set up as part of the case: the difference is that nobody has experienced them.

It is not that it just happens that nobody experiences them - like the lost book at the back of the drawer. We have stipulated that they are not experienced: it has become a defining quality, this makes them a special sort of logical thing. It is perverse to find difficulty in something of one's own making.

Brunton's point might be better expressed by saying that there is a difference between the logic applying to things which have been perceived, like the lost book, and of which it is therefore fortuitous that they are not perceived now, and things of which it is part of the data that they have never been perceived, like the so-far unknown fossil.

The difference is that in the former case we can say things about them using the language of perception, such as that they are hard, brown, etc. In the latter case the effect on the logic of making it an ex hypothesi condition that perception does not apply is that we can say nothing about them at all. We have no language in which to do so. Even to say of something 'It is there' involves being able to take part in discussions of the questions 'what?' and 'where?'

Yet note a further complication in the logic. To say of something that it has been discovered, like a previously unknown fossil, is not just to imply, it is to entail, that it was there unperceived. To identify an item which was not previously there is not to discover it, it is to invent it. The question we find ourselves having to address is this: Is discovery ever a possibility? Are apparent cases of discovery really all inventions? And since to ask such questions is to fly in the face of custom and usage we have to confront the paradox. We can give no meaning to something's being there unperceived; we cannot find a language to express it. Yet it is our language itself which makes it impossible for us, on first perceiving it, to deny that it had been there.

The reliance on the past tense for such existential claims at first sight distinguishes the two logical circumstances: but this is an illusion. Although one might say of the lost book at the back of the drawer 'I know it must be somewhere' on the basis of having had direct experience of it, one can also talk of an inferred fossil in such present-tense terms: and in the case of the ability regarding the book this too is fortuitous. Since one might quite well have forgotten all about it until turning out the drawer, on which occasion any comment ('So it was there all that time!') would be past tense.

Let us first summarise the situation, then investigate a possible outcome.

The Grammar of Discovery

To claim to have discovered something is to assert:

- (a) that it is there;
- (b) that it was there before; and
- (c) that it was hitherto unperceived.

Without (b) one is dealing not with a discovery but with an invention. Without (c) one could not claim to be the discoverer. It is a weak form of discovery indeed to find something which other people knew was there.

There is no difficulty with (a). Involved in the business of discovering is an act of perceiving. When one makes claim (a) one is simply noting that one is perceiving something. The ontological implications can be dealt with another time.

There would be no difficulty with claim (b) on its own. This is to do with understanding the correct use of the past tense. If one can describe the state of an item now, one can then proceed to extend the description to its past. Nor is there any latent difficulty in the distinction between being perceived and not being perceived. One can make quite definite statements about the non-perception of an item. I show you this book. I then put a cover over it, and say 'That book is now not being perceived'. We can know that for certain, in the present. After a bit, of course, such statements can make use of the past tense. But all this is about something which, to our knowledge, has been perceived. Its being unperceived is meaningful by contrast with that alternative. This cannot be the case with the unknown fossil.

There is just that one element missing. When you uncover the fossil it is like uncovering the book in all respects except that one. 'It was there' and 'It was unperceived' are quite compatible in the case of the book; we know exactly what they mean, because (i) we put it there and we found it there and (ii) we are contrasting its state in the interim with its perceived state.

Now once we have found the fossil we are able (though in a weaker form) to make such contrasts and observations, and hence to make such statements. What we cannot give coherence to is the ability to talk about the fossil during its unperceived state. If it is hard and blue now, we feel, it must have been hard and blue then; in the case of the book it is natural to assume that it stayed as we left it when we covered it over - there is no reason to suppose that it suddenly changed; but what do 'hard' and 'blue' mean when attributed to something which has never been, and is not being, touched or seen? They mean that it will be so describable when it is revealed? If so, then it follows that it is not so describable now.

Certainly it seems quite intelligible to say that the undiscovered fossil has a colour, or a density, within a certain range; the statement might turn out to be false, but it nevertheless looks meaningful. (3)

But what is actually meant is that the undiscovered fossil would, when discovered, turn out to have (N) a certain colour or density, or turn out not to have that; so that what is being talked about, hypothetically, is the discovered fossil, not the undiscovered one. What can be meant by saying anything about the fossil in its undiscovered state? Since we may only speculate that there may be such a thing, it must remain to all intents a fiction, an object of conjecture, and this conjecture must be limited to saying (a) that it will be discovered, and (b) what qualities it will turn out to have then. It cannot be about the fossil in its undiscovered state. We may now show why this is so, by taking an example.

Say the fossil about which one speculated remained for ever in the undiscovered state. This has always to be a possibility, if one wishes to talk about that state and therefore to be free of qualifications such as 'when it is discovered'. In such a case the claim 'There is a hard, blue undiscovered fossil (which will never be discovered)' cannot be differentiated, in terms of anything which might make it true or false, from its denial, 'There is no hard, blue undiscovered fossil (which will never be discovered)'. What then can it mean? Let us see if we can give it any sort of sense.

N: 'Turn out to have' does not imply, of course, 'turn out to have had all along'.

Two possibilities spring to mind. but neither prove to be free of a reference to prognostication of a future hypothetical event. (N)

- 1 Say that hard blue fossils had been found in the past. It could then be claimed that one more will be found in the future. A world in which this inductive probability is (now) true is not the same as a world in which it is false. But (in response) what is being said is that it is probable that it will turn out to be true, the apparent present probability being only a forecast of a future state of affairs.
- 2 Say that no hard blue fossils has been found, but only fissile red and brown ones. Knowledge of how fossils are formed might enable us to say that there must, somewhere, be a hard blue one. A world in which this deductive theory is correct is not the same as a world in which it is fallacious. Yet in response it must be pointed out that the theory can never be known to be correct or incorrect unless and until the fossil is found, and the apparent difference in the world now is again only a projection as to what the difference in the world might be in that event.

N: It is not necessary to hold that all existence statements rely on hypotheticals, to observe that statements about the existence of the unperceived have such an unavoidable dependence on them that they may perhaps be reduced to such hypotheticals. (4)

References

- 1 Philosophy. 45. October 1970. Pp. 267-280.
- 2 P. 273.
- 3 I owe these considerations to suggestions by Dr. Paul Helm.
- 4 This qualification is derived from an objection pointed out by Dr. Oswald Hanfling.

APPENDIX II.

Relating to Section I.3

Text of St. Anselm

S. ANSELMII cantuariensis archiepiscopi

OPERA OMNIA

volumen primum

Franciscus Salesius Schmitt.

(Nelson & Son Edinburgh.

1946 (MDCCCCXLVI)

Schmitt p 101.

Proslogion

Capitulum II

Quod vere sit deus

Ergo. domine. qui das fidei intellectum. da mihi. ut quantum scis expedire intelligam. quia es sicut credimus. et hoc es quod credimus. Et quidem credimus te esse aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit. An ergo non est aliqua talis natura. quia "dixit insipiens in corde suo: non est deus"? Sed certe ipse idem insipiens. cum audit hoc ipsum quod dico: 'aliquid quo maius nihil cogitari potest'. intelligit quod audit; et quod intelligit in intellectu eius est. etiam si non intelligat illud esse. Alius enim est rem esse in intellectu. aliud intelligere rem esse. Nam cum pictor praecogitat quae factururus est. habet quidem in intellectu. sed nondum intelligit esse quod nondum fecit.

Cum vero iam pinxit. et habet in intellectu et intelligit esse quod iam fecit. Cinvincitur ergo etiam insipiens esse vel in intellectu aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari potest. quia hoc cum audit intelligit. et quidquid intelligitur in intellectu est. Et certe id quo maius cogitari nequit. non potest esse in solo intellectu. Si enim vel in solo intellectu est. potest cogitari esse et in re. quod maius est. Si ergo id quo maius cogitari non potest. est in solo intellectu: id ipsum quo maius cogitari non potest. est quo maius cogitari potest. Sed certe hoc esse non potest. Existit ergo procul dubio aliquid quo maius cogitari non valet. et in intellectu et in re.

(Chapter III p.102: Quod non possit cogitari non esse.)

Capitulum IV

Quomodo insipiens dixit in corde. quod cogitari non potest.

Verum quomodo dixit in corde quod cogitare non potuit: aut quomodo cogitare non potuit quod dixit in corde. cum idem sit dicere in corde et cogitare? Quod si vere. immo quia vere et cogitavit quia dixit in corde. et non dixit in corde quia cogitare non potuit: non uno tantum modo dicitur aliquid in corde vel cogitatur. Aliter enim cogitatur res cum vox eam significans cogitatur. aliter cum id ipsum quod res est intelligitur. Illo itaque modo potest cogitari deus non esse. isto vero minime. Nullus quippe intelligens id quod deus est. potest cogitare quia deus non est.

p.104: licet haec verba dicat in corde. aut sine ulla aut cum aliqua extranea significatione. Deus enim est id quo maius cogitari non potest. Quod qui bene intelligit. utique intelligit id ipsum sic esse. ut nec cogitatione queat non esse. Qui ergo intelligit sic esse deum. nequit eum non esse cogitare.

Gratias tibi. bone domine. gratias tibi. quia quod prius credidi te donante. iam sic intelligo te illuminant. ut si te esse nolim credere. non possim non intelligere.

Schmitt p.128

Gaunilonis pro insipiente

(6) gives argument about lost island.

Schmitt p.133

Responsio Editoris

(III)

.....Palam autem iam videtur 'quo non valet cogitari maius' non posse cogitari non esse. whod tam certa ratione veritatis existit.

(IV)

.....Nam et si nulla quae sunt possint intelligi non esse. omnia tamen possunt cogitari non esse, praeter id quod summe est.

P.134

Symposium: On What There Is

Geach has a number of points of criticism to make on Quine's stand regarding existence. Quine says that the basic ontological question is 'What is there?' Geach points out that this is meaningless without a context. (p.135). He is unhappy too about Quine's idea that the acceptance of an ontology is a matter of choice. "We need not ... accept Quine's view that various ontologies may be equally right and that our choice of ontology must depend on our various interests and purposes. For the conceptual scheme is not a matter of free choice. Certain concepts, like existence and truth and thing and property, are used, and cannot but be used, in all rational discourse whatsoever: and ontology is an attempt to scrutinize our use of them. To be right or wrong in ontology means being clear or muddled about such fundamentals." (p.136).

Ayer is also concerned to criticise Quine's point that the use of terms does not commit the user to holding that what it denotes exists. Ayer's argument is that it can. "At the same time, one may very well wish to make assertions from which it does follow that something exists: and to the extent that we do make such assertions we are, according to Quine, committed to an ontology.

To say one is committed to an ontology is, indeed, just his way of saying that one affirms that something or other exists." (p.137). He later says with characteristic directness that one's assertions may well stem from one's ontological beliefs: "When Quine and Goodman renounced abstract entities, were they thinking only that it would be more convenient ... was there not a suggestion that their reason for renouncing them was that they did not believe in their existence?" (p.148).

References

- 1 GEACH. AYER. QUINE. 'Symposium: On What There Is'.
Aristotelian Society. Supplementary Volume. 35. 1951.
pp. 125-60.

To exist or not to exist

That is the question. If, on the one hand, we say that Hamlet does not exist, then we seem liable to have the play without the Prince: on the other hand to attribute existence to a fictional character seems inappropriate, if not downright contradictory, and would lead to an overpopulated universe.

First, to clarify the situation, let us distinguish between three meanings of the term Hamlet. We may do this by the slightly artificial ploy of using signs to identify two of them: 1. Hamlet, and 2. 'Hamlet'. 1. is the play written by Shakespeare and called after its main character. 2. is the part played by the actor in the play.

Now clearly both these exist. What then is the problem? The question of whether then Hamlet himself exists seems to imply that behind 2. there is a Platonic absolute of which 2. is an imitation, or an instance. This would perhaps follow from the fact that at any one time several different actors are portraying several slightly different Hamlets in different parts of the world. None of these can, we would wish to say, be Hamlet himself, just as none of the Santa Clauses in different department stores can be the real Father Christmas.

This is because Hamlet and Father Christmas, like everything else, are bound by the logical impossibility of being in several different places at the same time. (One might have said that not more than one of them could be real, but that would leave us searching for the criterion for deciding which one, a search which we may confidently predict would prove to be unsuccessful).

What, however, is the actor doing, when he portrays Hamlet? He is on the face of it memorising and pronouncing lines written by Shakespeare. Yet his intention is to portray Hamlet. He will be able to tell us a lot about this person, beyond the mere repetition of the lines. Now if all the actors at present portraying Hamlet are intending to portray (as we may assume) the same person, then we have a situation very much like Plato's forms, in which each maker of a bed or a table, however diverse their physical interpretations (due to the imperfections of human abilities), has his eye on the Form of Bed, or Table, or whatever, made by God.

If that were the case. then there is a Father Christmas. We know that. because we see attempts to approximate to the real. absolute Father Christmas so similar as to be recognisably imitations of the same thing. Nor would there be any difficulty if it were known (forgetting for the moment about Saxo Grammaticus) that Hamlet was a pure invention of Shakespeare's. There is no logical difference between something being made by Shakespeare and something (like the Form of Bed) being made by God.

Dealing with the difference between descriptions and names. Russell maintains that the distinction is that names are meaningless unless there is an object which they designate. and that this difference is reflected by the truth-qualities attributable to each case.

"There was a time when. if you had lived at Athens and had said 'Who is Socrates?' the man of whom you asked the question might have pointed and said, 'That is Socrates'. It is because of this now distant connection with experience of people long since dead that propositions about Socrates are part of history and not of fable. like propositions about Hamlet. (N)

N: This line of thinking is more fully analysed by Keith S. Donellan (1). who terms it 'the historical explanation theory of reference.

'Hamlet' pretends to be a name, but is not; and all statements about Hamlet are false. They only become true when, for Hamlet, we substitute 'Hamlet'. This illustrates one of the peculiarities of proper names: that, unlike descriptions, they are meaningless unless there is an object which they designate." (2)

But are all statements about Hamlet, as opposed to 'Hamlet', really false? How about: 'In Shakespeare's eponymous play, Hamlet was the son of Gertrude and Claudius'. If one puts inverted commas in there one would, to make sense, have to add 'the name of': 'Hamlet' was the name of the son of the characters 'Gertrude' and 'Claudius', or 'the son of Gertrude and Claudius was called 'Hamlet'.'

And yet, in Russell's terms, if there is a true statement about Hamlet then there must be something which the name is designating. We can easily appreciate the difficulty if we take Russell's example of Socrates as a standard. There was (we may safely assume) no time at which the visitor to Elsinore, asking 'Who is Hamlet?', would have had a mournful youth wearing black clothes pointed out to him.

This matter of history is probably the key to the way we use the word 'exist' in this sort of case. Richard III existed: Hamlet never existed. Richard III died, so no longer exists, but the name nevertheless designates something which, under the right circumstances (i.e. between 1483 and 1485, in certain parts of Britain) might have been pointed out in answer to a question. The name Hamlet designates no such thing, either past or present.

In other words there is once again the prime empirical, or positivist, appeal to experience. In relation to existence we ultimately want to know the answer to such questions as 'where?', 'when?', and 'how do you know?' The answers to these questions may be true or false, and in the case of works of fiction will be false. That is how fiction differs from history, where they may be true. (N see overleaf).

N: A number of interesting points about fictional references are made in Searle's book. 'Speech Acts' (3). His theme is that fictional characters do exist in fiction, and so can be referred to. (p.78). He contrasts the case of Sherlock Holmes, where reference can be made within the 'fictional mode of discourse' with that of Mrs. Sherlock Holmes, where reference fails to take place. (4) Similar points are often made about Hamlet's wife. (5). It is compatible with Sherlock Holmes's not existing. Searle says, that he "exists-in-fiction" (p.79). Gerald Vision (6) finds the effect of those hyphens interesting. Writing of Searle's book, he says that the fact that we include in our understanding of reference the ability to refer to Sherlock Holmes means that what Searle gives as 'the axiom of existence', "Whatever is referred to must exist" is wrong. (7). Redmon (5) puts this another way. 'Hamlet does not exist' and 'Hamlet's wife does not exist' are, he says, in different languages. (p.59). He might have said they arise in different contexts. "To say 'Pegasus does not exist' is to say that 'Pegasus' is not in a certain language" (p.64).

References

1. DONELLAN. Keith S. 'Speaking of Nothing'. Philosophical Review. 83. January 1974. pp.3-31. (See also above. note to p.181.)
2. RUSSELL. Bertrand. 'My Philosophical Development'. Allen & Unwin. 1959. p.168.
3. SEARLE. J. 'Speech Acts'. Cambridge University Press. 1969.
4. See also the note on Charles Crittenden. p.184. above.
5. REDMON. R. B. 'Exists'. Mind. 82. January 1973. pp.56-57.
6. VISION. Gerald. 'Referring To What Does Not Exist'. Canadian Journal of Philosophy. 3. pp.619-634. June 1974.
7. SEARLE. p.77. VISION. p.629.

The Spirits of the Yellow Leaves - a footnote to the grammar of existence

In the north of Thailand there are a number of semi-nomadic tribes. They do not regard themselves as Thai, but rather maintain purely tribal affiliations. Among these one tribe has the unusual distinction, both anthropologically and philosophically, that they were thought until recently not to exist. It is not that these people were not known about at all: they were considered to be purely mythical. The Thais call them the Phi Tong Luang, meaning The Spirits of the Yellow Leaves. Their own name for themselves is variously transliterated as Brabri, or Mlabri, or combinations of these sounds.

A number of questions arise all at once. If one asks 'Who said the Brabri did not exist?' one is put in the position of asking then 'the who?' It seems at first to be nothing to do with the Brabri. The Brabri were never consulted on the subject. The decision was, as it were, taken on their behalf. Of course they have only themselves to blame, for lurking so elusively in the wild banana trees and the giant bamboos, but it must nevertheless come as something of an irritation to be told that you have been discovered, when you presumably knew quite well that you were there all along.

The Brabri always knew that they existed. There is no problem of unperceived existence in this case. It seems at first to be purely a question of name. It was not of the Brabri that there was doubt: it was The Spirits of the Yellow Leaves that were thought not to exist. Here is a brain-twister indeed: there could not have been a doubt as to the existence of the Brabri, because no-one had ever heard of them. Yet it is not the case either that we have a simple situation of contrast between a description and a name. Phi Tong Nuang is the Thai name for these people, and Brabri, or Mrabri, or Mlabri, their own. The two names mean the same thing, designate the same items. It happens that all the hilltribes of northern Thailand have two names, the ones the Thais call them and the one they call themselves. There has never been a problem about identification. Both names mean the same thing. Any statement we make about one has the same truth conditions as it would if it were about the other; and thus it was the case that people thought the Brabri did not exist.

The discovery that The Spirits of the Yellow Leaves were real means, then, that we have to entertain the possibility that someone will one day step into a jungle grove to be confronted with a herd of unicorns. It is a general principle, of course, that nothing can be ruled out unless it is self-contradictory.

Does their emergence thus bring with it a whole procession of putative entities: the Loch Ness Monster and the Abominable Snowman, followed by dragons, leprechauns and centaurs, led into the Grand Parade of reality by The Spirits of the Yellow Leaves?

In fact the matter is rather more mundane. All that has taken place is the correction of an error. The Thais mistakenly thought that the Brabri did not exist: the Thais mistakenly thought that the term 'The Spirits of the Yellow Leaves' designated a fictional class: they knew, however, what it would be like for the opposite to be the case. The emergence of the Brabri from the jungle provided the experience to counterpart this understanding. It amounted to the discovery, not of a 'new' tribe, but of the falsity of the supposition that that experience was not obtainable.

The biggest snail on earth - Thoughts on the concept of a necessary being

In a paper entitled 'God as Necessary Being' published in The Journal of Philosophy (1) John Hick draws a distinction between logical and factual necessity, and in agreement with J. N. Findlay he gives the opinion that "post-Humean empiricism can assign no meaning to the idea of necessary existence, since nothing can be conceived to exist that cannot be conceived not to exist. No proposition of the form 'x exists' can be analytically true."

Anselm's example inevitably springs to mind in contention with this:- a being 'than which a greater cannot be thought'. I want to suggest now that a statement of the form "The biggest snail on earth exists" is necessarily true, given that there are snails. Of course there might have been no snails, but then there might have been no beings; and conclusions as to the existence of a necessary being are reliant on the prior assumption that there are beings. It is of course not being claimed that it is necessarily the case that there are snails, but that if there are snails then 'The biggest snail on earth exists' is necessarily true. I then intend to ask whether, if this is so, it is a question (in the terms which Hick uses in the article) of logical, or of factual necessity?

If "The biggest snail on earth exists" is true, it is at first tempting to say that there is something accidental about its truth, since there might well have been a bigger snail than this one. But this is of course not so. There cannot be a bigger snail, on earth, than the biggest snail on earth. Surely then we have here a case of logical necessity?

Hick might reply that the proposition ("The biggest snail on earth exists") is not analytic, but synthetic, in that the requirement of existence is not present in the phrase 'the biggest snail on earth'. But is the analytic form then the only form which can be taken by 'logical necessity'? Hick assumes so, on the grounds that Kant "derives the category of necessity from the necessary or analytic proposition in formal logic" (2) Does this mean that it cannot also be derived in some other way?

It seems likely in any case that we could argue that 'existence' is contained in 'biggest on earth', in that there must, by virtue of the meanings of the words, always be a referent for this term. That would certainly be one way of assimilating this apparent case of logical necessity.

Now if (as Hick puts it in the article) "no matter of fact can be logically necessary", then is it not a matter of fact that the biggest snail on earth exists? I take it that something is 'necessary' if it could not have been otherwise; and this seems to be the case with the existence of the biggest snail; but is this, in this case, a factual or a logical matter?

On the face of it, it looks as if this could not be a factual necessity because we know the truth of the proposition without being able to demonstrate it empirically. Yet is it not just the sort of thing which we feel should be a matter of fact? With these doubts before us we must now review the question of whether this is really a case of necessity at all.

Certainly it is not just that the biggest snail on earth happens to exist; it couldn't not. 'Ah, but this one, which is the biggest, might not have been the biggest. Its qualifying for the title is contingent. Things might have happened or not happened - its growth might have been stunted, another's might have been enhanced - to change this.' But then some other snail would have been the biggest on earth. The position could never have been vacant. That is not a matter of contingent accident. That is inevitable once we understand the structure of the phrase 'biggest on earth'.

What is it, then, about this phrase which gives it this power? Let us analyse it and find out.

'Biggest' involves, without further amplification, a specificness not shared by 'big' or 'bigger'. 'A bigger snail exists' would require the addition of more information, for instance in the form 'than Sammy'.

'A big snail exists' is only meaningful if again we have prior information, such as 'Sammy is a big snail' - but this would be too vague. What makes him big? 'Sammy is a bigger snail than Freddy' gives us a standard to judge by; 'and a bigger snail exists'. This would be true in all cases except one: the case of the biggest snail on earth - it would only be untrue in the one case that Sammy were that snail.

But "The biggest snail on earth exists" is always true, and always specific to the extent that there is only one (or, to take account of the dead-heat situation which we shall be dealing with again later, one group) answering to that description. As it happens we do not know, and in principle we could perhaps never know, which snail is that snail. That seems odd, since certainty is what we are after. But the statement of which we wish to test the truth is not "This (or N) is the biggest snail on earth", but simply "The biggest snail on earth exists".

A little more investigation will reveal that it is the very quality of 'biggest' preventing us allocating it to any particular example which also renders it certainly applicable to some example.

What is this quality? In mathematical terms 'biggest' is a variable with only one possible value. This is not exceptional. when we consider that at any one time any variable can only have one value; and in any case the value of 'biggest' can also change over time '- as snails grow, and others stop growing. Implied is the additional specification 'at this time' or 'at time t'. We do not have the information available to us to be able to give the value of 'biggest at time t'. Perhaps this is a function of our choice of example. In the case of something under our (theoretical) control and fully observable, we should be able to say both "The biggest aeroplane in the world exists" and "This is the biggest aeroplane". But the point which makes 'biggest' (or any superlative) of interest is that we would be able to know the truth of the first statement without ever having to be able to make the second. The ability to make the second then becomes irrelevant. The truth of an existential statement with a superlative as its subject is guaranteed. How does this work?

It works like this. There are snails. This is a factual matter. and it is factual also that some snails are bigger than others. Neither of those two things need have been the case. Adding the bounds 'on earth' we may be sure, again in a factual way, that the totality of snails, at any one time, is a finite quantity.

We are on the borders of the logical here, since the addition of 'on earth' brings with it this important element of finitude. To say 'on earth' is to rule out, a priori, an infinite quantity - particularly if one adds 'now'. The next two steps move us from the factual to the logical.

If all snails are either bigger or smaller than each other then we have a sequence in which B is bigger than A. C bigger than B. and so on. Given finite conditions, this sequence must have an end. We eventually get to ' is bigger than ' and find - we have run out of snails! To put it more succinctly: in any finite series there must be a final term. This is not a discovery arising from our excursion into helicology. It is a logical conclusion arising from the meaning of the term 'finite series'. The sentence was analytic after all. We have thus discovered why the existence of referents of superlatives is logically guaranteed: it is because the assertion of that is implicitly analytic. It takes the general form: in a finite series there is a final term. The 'final' is included in the meaning of 'finite'.

Findlay, quoted by Hick, says that the idea of necessary existence is ruled out. "since nothing can be conceived to exist that cannot also be conceived not to exist". (1)

What would it be like to conceive the biggest snail on earth not to exist? Shall we attempt this? First there is the possibility of a tie (referred to above) to be disposed of. Say that after all the snails in the world had been examined there were two larger than all others which the most exhaustive process of measurement revealed to be exactly the same size.

Now far from concluding that the biggest snail on earth therefore did not exist, we should (I suggest) rather say that there were two of them. Of course there cannot be two of such a singular thing as 'the biggest snail', but does not 'the two biggest snails' make sense?

There remains again the practical problem referred to earlier. Even after carrying out the world snail census and identifying the winner, we could not be sure that there was not somewhere, say hidden in a cave on the island of Ogygia, a snail greater even than this.

Yet there is no problem here. If that snail existed, it would certainly exist. We do not know much about it, but we do know that. We need only say, in the meantime: 'This is the biggest snail on earth as far as we know (and it exists); and if a bigger one turns up, that would then be

the biggest snail on earth as far as we would know (and it would exist).' There is no way a bigger snail could be produced which did not exist.

However it might be objected that we cannot say with certainty of any item that this is the biggest snail on earth: we can only say that it is as far as we know' and this perpetual qualification certainly means that the biggest-snail-on-earth-without-qualification is incapable of being arrived at - and so does not exist?

Yet although we cannot say confidently that this or that snail is the one, we can still say that there must be one, and not in a Platonic heaven but, by definition, on earth. Do we mean that God knows which it is, whereas we remain ignorant? No. We mean that we know that there is such a thing, and that it may be this one; and if it is not this one then it is some other one. It is a sort of probability theory.

So, the biggest snail on earth is a necessary being! Moreover it seems that its necessity must be logical, and that that of all other items in this category will be, and, by the same argument, all other cases of necessity. There seems to be no room for the concept of factual necessity.

References

1. HICK. J. 'God as Necessary Being'. The Journal of Philosophy. 1960. p.725.
2. Ibid. p.726.

'Religion and the Scientific Outlook' by T. R. Miles (1)

Some questions about existence ask for a verbal decision.
(2) These cases are 'not a matter for observational investigation'. Does Professor Miles perhaps then propose three types of existence question:

1. where the answer may be decided without reference to observation - the 'verbal decision' type.
2. where observation is relevant to the answer. '... in so far as the result of such an investigation influences our decisions.' (3)
3. where the answer may be decided by reference to observation only.

It seems that 3 may be considered to be in the majority.
(... 'only a minority' are not matters for 'straightforward investigation').

I want to ask, contrary to this, whether there are any such questions as 3 at all: are there any questions about existence which are not at least partly requests for a verbal decision (or something equivalent)?

It is no coincidence, though a slightly separate point, that questions about existence are never asked in cases where observational investigation on its own might answer them. People ask whether Father Christmas exists rather in spite of the evidence, but not whether Harold Wilson exists, since to ask such a question one has to be in possession of the answer. And if someone asked 'Do trees exist?' it would be either an appeal for a decision about idealism, or a reference to botanical classification, never a matter to be decided by going outside.

The decision-making principle 'holds particularly in the case of scientific technical terms' (4). Yet oddly enough a general extension of this principle seems to be contradicted most effectively in experimental science. Take for instance the search for the ultimate sub-atomic particle. Physicists conclude from the evidence of unexplained phenomena that there must be a further unidentified particle. They then as it were go in search of it. They want to know 'does the minitron (shall we call it) exist?' And this is to be settled by experiment.

But what exactly is happening here? They have already decided that 'yes' is the best answer: the theoretical system they are using cannot adequately describe events without the use of another term. All that is now required is that the minitron shall conform sufficiently well with other aspects of their concept-system. (If it did not they would be obliged to modify either the system or their description of the particle until it did - a process that T. S. Kuhn has referred to as 'ad hoc modification'). This is hardly a case where the existence of something is decided by observation.

Can we think of such a case? One is tempted to take the example of something previously unknown. But if it were quite unknown its discovery could hardly be an answer to the question 'Does x exist?', since no such question could have been asked. How about 'Does something exist which is at present unknown?' This is a very interesting question, but for the wrong reasons, since once again I claim that it is not at all answerable by investigation or observation alone. If you now come across an x which fills the bill, one would want to know in what sense something which by definition could not be known could be said to exist. Certainly no empirical meaning could be given to its existence before discovery. There was no way its existence could have been known to affect anything observable.

If, in retrospect, you want to say that we can detect its prior existence, are we not admitting that we did, all the time, know of it, though without identifying it? Certainly it goes against the grain to say that it comes suddenly into existence when discovered. Yet one cannot ask, let alone answer, existence questions about it until then. And then, of course, one does not need to.

It is tempting to consider this at greater length but there is a further important point to discuss. As I see it the main burden of Professor Miles's argument comes on pp.40-43, which is that there is a useful distinction between first-order and second-order existence questions. 'The absolute-existence mistake consists in treating (second-order questions) as though they were first-order questions, and as though they could be asked in vacuo independently of the context which gives them their meaning.' (5)

Does this imply (the 'and' leaves it in doubt) that first-order questions can be asked without respect to a context which gives them their meaning? P.39 '... the existence of chairs, tables, bookcases can be determined empirically by simple observation ...' But how can simple observation tell you that the thing you find to exist is a chair?

On p.42 Professor Miles considers whether having unity of structure constitutes being a thing (and therefore existing?) and says, with regard to examples very relevant to this argument, that 'What is required in each case is a ruling or decision, in part analogous to a decision in a court of law.

Pursued, this line of thought might indicate that 'the context which gives them their meaning' is relevant to any existence question.

Perhaps one could sum up the 'absolute existence' and first-order/second-order discussion on pp.40-43 somewhat as follows:

1. Existence questions which misleadingly look first-order may be better restated in second-order form (6)
2. If the question which they represent is then asked, criteria for deciding whether a word is a thing-word become relevant. (7)
3. The answer tells us about the use of the word. But a word is a thing-word if 'that for which it purports to stand' (8) is a thing.
4. And things are paramountly such as we would 'feel disposed to say' (9) exist.

If that is at all a fair summary, it leads to the conclusion that second-order questions are every bit as much about existence as are first-order ones - their route to that end being only slightly less direct.

Possibly, however, the absolute-existence argument does not rest on this distinction, but on the difficulty of deciding on a method for approaching metaphysical questions. (10) So that the argument might alternatively run: 1. Questions about the ultimate constituents of the universe are not empirical. (11). 2. Therefore there is no agreed method for solving them. (12). 3. Therefore they are meaningless. (13).

This is perhaps to simplify grossly; but if something like that is being said, all we have to do to refute it is point to an agreed method (equivalent to the laws of mathematics/logic/language/law ...) for solving such non-empirical questions as do not fit these other categories.

The point recurs on p.144. To what frame of reference does the God-statement belong? And by what methods are arguments within that frame of reference conducted? The argument appears to demand an empirical sense (14). since 'exists' cannot be used without a context - there is no absolute sense of 'exist'. But equally one might take this line of reasoning to indicate the need for another frame of reference? Something of the sort has been hinted at by the ideas of a 'request for a verbal decision', 'analogous to a decision in a court of law'?

To answer the demand that 'it is up to him to say what frame of reference it is and by what methods arguments within that frame of reference are conducted' (15). I would introduce the term 'conceptual'. To return first to the types of existence question with which we started. I would say that all existence questions are conceptual in my sense: that some are empirical as well; and some are mathematical, moral, etc. as well.

This would seem to be a matter of administration, of epistemological organisation. Shall we try an analogy? The Borough Council is divided into departments, of health, housing, parks and gardens, refuse-collection, etc. Each department has among its activities an element of administration: each has similar problems of administration, as well as its special problems and duties of clinics, rates, flowerbeds, dustbins ... But there is also a Department of Administration. This concerns itself with the way in which the others are related - the co-ordination and overall effectiveness of the whole, not just the parts - with the administration elements of each of them, and also, incidentally, with its own internal administration, its own efficiency.

This. by the generality of its application. would seem to avoid the reductionism implied by talk of 'verbal decisions' (Does anyone seriously want to say that the existence of God is a matter for verbal decision?') Substitute 'conceptual' in the above sense in the sentence 'the existence of the unconscious is a matter for verbal decision in a way in which the existence of chairs is not'. and one may see how the hierarchy of existence statements is preserved. Both require conceptual decisions: the existence of chairs requires some physical effects as well. since chairs come under the Department of Physical Objects: the existence of the unconscious is a matter for mainly conceptual decision. since such terms are dealt with principally by the Department of Concepts.

References

1. MILES. T. R. 'Religion and the Scientific Outlook'
Allen & Unwin, 1959. Referred to above. IV.4.
Reference 7.
2. Op.cit. p.38.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Op.cit. p.43.
6. Op.cit. p.41. central paragraph.
7. Op.cit. p.41, bottom.
8. Loc.cit.
9. Op.cit. bottom p.41 to top p.42.
10. Op.cit. p.41.
11. Op.cit. cf. bottom p.40.
12. Op.cit. first paragraph p.41.
13. Ibid.
14. Op.cit. bottom p.144.
15. Op.cit. p.144. middle.
16. Op.cit. p.152.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- acknowledgement of the main works which
have been used in writing this thesis

- ACTON. H. B. 'The Illusion of the Epoch'. Cohen & West. 1955.
- ARISTOTLE. 'Categories'. 'On Interpretation'. 'Prior Analytics'. Trs. H. P. Cooke, H. Tredennick. Loeb. 1973.
- AYER. A. J. 'The Problem of Knowledge'. Pelican. 1957.
- AYER. A. J. 'Language, Truth and Logic'. Gollancz. 1962.
- AYERS. M. R. 'Berkeley and the Meaning of Existence'. 'History of European Ideas'. 7, 1986.
- BERKELEY. G. 'Principles of Human Knowledge'. Everyman.
- BERLIN. I. 'Empirical propositions and hypothetical statements'. Mind. LIX. 235. July 1950. pp. 295-6.
- BOYCE. M. See FOY. W. (ed.) 'Man's Religious Quest'. Croom Helm. 1978. p.611.
- BRADFORD. D. E. 'Bibliography on the Topic of Existence'. Philosophical Research Archives, 1976. 2.
- BROWN. S. 'Realism and Logical Analysis', 'Verification and Meaning', 'Language and Reality', in 'Thought and Reality: Central Themes in Wittgenstein's Philosophy'. Open University Press. 1976.
- BRUNTON. J. A. 'Berkeley and the External World'. Philosophy. XXVIII. 1953. pp. 325-341.
- BRUNTON. J. A. 'The Absolute Existence of Unthinking Things'. Philosophy. XLV. 174. October 1970.
- CAMACHO. L. A. 'Sobre lo que Existe y lo que no Existe'. Revista de Filosofia de la Universidad de Costa Rica 19. January to December 1981. pp. 33-38.
- CAPRA F. 'The Turning Point'. Wildwood House. 1982.

- CARNAP, R. 'Logical Positivism'. Trans. Arthur Pap. Allen & Unwin 1959.
- CLARK, R. W. 'The Existence of Universals'. New Scholasticism. 35. Summer 1981. pp. 363-372.
- CORNFORD, F. M. 'Plato's Theory of Knowledge'. Routledge 1970.
- CRITTENDEN, C. 'Thinking About Non-Being'. Inquiry. 16.
- CRITTENDEN, C. 'Ontology and the Theory of Descriptions'. Philosophy and Phenomenological Research. 31. 1970. pp. 85-96.
- CUPITT, D. 'Taking Leave of God'. SCM Press. 1980.
- CUSMARIU, A. 'Nonexistence Without Nonexistents'. Philosophical Studies. 33. May. 1978. pp. 409-412.
- DEELY, N. 'Reference to the Non-Existent'. Thomist. 39. April 1975. pp. 253-308.
- DEVINE, E. 'The Perfect Island, the Devil, and existent Unicorns'. American Philosophical Quarterly. 12. July 1975. pp. 255-260.
- DILMAN, I. 'Quine on Ontology, Necessity and Experience, a Philosophical Critique'. Albany, SUNY Press, 1984.
- DONELLAN, K. S. 'Speaking of Nothing'. Philosophical Review. 83. January 1974. pp. 3-31.
- DUMMETT, M. 'Frege, Philosophy of Language'. Duckworth. 1973. p. 386.
- EDDINGTON, A. 'The Nature of the Physical World'. Cambridge University Press. 1929.
- FEAGIN, L. 'On Fictional Entities'. Philosophy and Literature. 7. October 1983. pp. 240-3.
- FERGUSON, J. 'Socrates, a source book'. Macmillan. 1970.
- FOY, W. (ed.) 'Man's Religious Quest'. Croom Helm. 1978. p.611.
- FREUD, S. 'Introductory Lecture on Psycho-Analysis'. Trs. Joan Riviere. Allen & Unwin. 1922. pp.234-5.
- FREUD, S. 'The Origins of Psycho-Analysis'. London and New York. 1954.

FREUD. S. 'The Interpretation of Dreams'. Penguin Books. 1978.

GEACH. P. T., AYER. J. A. and QUINE. W. V.: 'Symposium: On What There Is'. Aristotelian Society. Supplementary Volume 25. 1951.

GRUBE. G. M. A. 'Plato's Thought'. Methuen. 1935. pp. 15-16.

HALLET. H. F. 'On Things in Themselves'. Philosophy. XIV. 54. April 1939.

HARE. R. M. 'The Language of Morals'. Oxford University Press. 1970. p.129.

HARMAN. G. 'Quine on Meaning and Existence'. Review of Metaphysics. 21. 1: pp. 124-151. September 1967. 2: pp. 343-367. December 1967.

HAWKING. S. 'A Brief History of Time'. Bantam Press. 1988. p.99.

HERMANN. K. 'Reading Disability'. Copenhagen. Munksgaard. 1959: cited in HARZEM. P. & MILES, T. R.. 'Conceptual Issues in Operant Psychology' John Wiley & Sons, 1978. p. 99.

HICK. J. 'God as Necessary Being'. The Journal of Philosophy. 1960.

HICK. J. (ed.). 'The Existence of God'. Macmillan. 1964.

HONORE. A. M. 'Reference to the Non-Existent'. Philosophy. 46. October 1971. pp. 302-308.

JADACKI, J. J. 'Being and Existence: On the Being of What Seems Not To Be'. Dialectics and Humanism. 8. Fall 1981. pp. 131-139.

JOAD. C. E. M. 'Plato's Theory of Forms and Modern Physics'. Philosophy. VIII. 30. April 1933.

KANT. I. 'The Critique of Pure Reason'. Trs. Norman Kemp Smith. Macmillan. 1980.

KELLY. C. 'On Things That Do Not Exist And Never Have Existed'. Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association. 6. 1987. pp. 181-190.

KENNY. A. 'Wittgenstein'. Penguin. 1973.

KIRK. G. S. and RAVEN. J. E. 'The Presocratic Philosophers'. Cambridge University Press, 1975.

- KOESTLER. A. 'The Ghost in the Machine'. Picador, 1967.
- KOFFKA. K. 'Principles of Gestalt Psychology'. Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York, 1935.
- LAMBERT. K. 'On "The Durability of Impossible Objects"' Inquiry, 19. 1976. pp. 251-254.
- LAMBERT. K. 'Impossible Objects'. Inquiry, 17. 1974. pp. 303-312.
- LING. T. 'A History of Religion East and West'. Macmillan, 1977.
- LINSKY. L. 'Semantics and the Philosophy of Language'. University of Chicago Press, 1952.
- LINSKY. L. 'Names and Descriptions'. University of Chicago Press, 1977. p. 26.
- MALCOLM. N. 'Anselm's Ontological Arguments'. 'The Philosophical Review'. January 1960. Reprinted in 'The Existence of God' ed. J. Hick. Macmillan, 1964 and 'Religion and Understanding' Blackwell, 1967.
- McPHERSON, T. 'The Existence of God'. Mind. LIX. October 1950. pp. 545-550.
- McTAGGART. J. McT. E. 'The Nature of Existence'. Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- MILES. T. R. 'A Note on Existence'. Mind. LX. 1951. pp. 399-402.
- MILES. T. R. 'Berkeley and Ryle. Some Comparisons'. Philosophy. XXVIII. 104. 1953. pp. 58-71..
- MILES. T. R. 'Religion and the Scientific Outlook'. Allen & Unwin. 1959.
- MILES. T. R. 'Eliminating the Unconscious'. Pergamon Press 1966.
- MILLER. B. 'Negative Existential Propositions'. Analysis. 42. October 1982. pp. 181-188.
- MILLER. B. "'Exists' and Existence". The Review of Mathematics. 40. December 1986. pp. 237-270.
- MOORE. G. E. 'Some Main Problems of Philosophy'. Allen & Unwin. 1953.

- MOURELATOS. A. P. D. 'Some Alternatives in Interpreting Parmenides'. Monist. 62.
- PITCHER. G. (ed) 'Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations'. Macmillan, 1970.
- PLATO. 'Phaedo'. Trs. H. Tredennick. Penguin, 1954.
- PLATO. 'The Republic'. Trs. H. D. P. Lee. Penguin, 1956.
- POPPER. K. R. 'Conjectures and Refutations'. Routledge, 1972.
- PRZELECKI. M. 'On What There Is Not' and 'There Is Nothing That Does Not Exist.' Dialectics and Humanism. 8. Fall 1981. pp. 123-129.
- QUINE. W. V. 'From a Logical Point of View'. Harvard University Press, 1953.
- QUINE. W. V. 'Ontological Relativity and other Essays'. Columbia, New York. 1969.
- REDMON. R. B. 'Exists'. Mind. 82. January 1973. pp.56-57.
- REDMON. R. B. 'Names and Existence'. Philosophy and Phenomenological Research. 38. June 1978. pp. 524-53.
- REIN. A. 'Exist(s)'. Philosophical Quarterly. 38. October 1988.
- ROUTLEY, R. 'Some Things Do Not Exist'. Notre Dame School of Formal Logic. 1966. pp. 251-276.
- ROUTLEY, R. 'Impossible Objects'. Inquiry. 19. 1976. pp. 251-3.
- ROUTLEY, R. 'Exploring Meinong's Jungle and Beyond'. Research School of Social Science, Australian National University, 1979.
- ROUTLEY, R. 'On What There Is Not'. Philosophy and Phenomenological Research. 43. December 1982. pp. 151-178.
- RUSSELL. B. 'The History of Western Philosophy'. Allen & Unwin, 1946.
- RUSSELL. B. 'Logic and Knowledge'. Allen & Unwin, 1956.
- RUSSELL. B. 'My Philosophical Development'. Allen & Unwin, 1959. p.168.

- RYLE. G. 'The Concept of Mind'. Peregrin Books. 1970.
- RYLE. G. 'Dilemmas'. Cambridge University Press. 1973.
- SEARLE. J. 'Speech Acts'. Cambridge University Press. 1969.
- SENIOR. M. 'Noise and Sound in Llandudno'. New Scientist. 6th November, 1975. p.322.
- STACK. G. J. 'Berkeley's Concept of Existence'. Modern Schoolman, 52. March 1976.
- STEVENSON. C. L. 'Ethics and Language'. Yale University Press. 1944. p.21.
- SUDARAJA. P. 'Language and Ontological Commitments'. Darshana International. 6. October 1966. pp. 11-31.
- TYRRELL. G. N. M. 'Physics and the Ontological Problem'. Philosophy. VII. 28. October, 1932.
- VAN INWAGEN. P. 'Creatures of Fiction'. American Philosophical Quarterly. 14. October 1977. pp. 299-308.
- VESEY. G. et al. 'Understanding Wittgenstein'. Macmillan. 1974.
- VISION. G. 'Referring to What Does Not Exist'. Canadian Journal of Philosophy. 3. June 1974. pp. 619-634.
- WENZ. P. S. 'The Books in Berkeley's Closet'. Hermathena. 128. Summer 1980.
- WHITE. F. D. 'Searle on Existence'. Philosophical Papers. 2. October 1973.
- WINCH, P. 'The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy'. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973.
- WITTGENSTEIN, L. 'Tractatus'. Blackwell, 1947.
- WITTGENSTEIN, L. 'Philosophical Investigations'. Blackwell, 1953.
- WITTGENSTEIN, L. 'Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics'. Blackwell, 1956.
- WITTGENSTEIN, L. 'Zettel'. Blackwell. 1967.
- WITTGENSTEIN, L. 'On Certainty'. Blackwell. 1974.